

CRITICAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF JOEL SALATIN:  
THE ALTERNATIVE FARMING MINISTER OF *TERROIR*

by

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## ABSTRACT

I present a critical rhetorical analysis that examines appeals made by farmer and author, Joel Salatin. I analyze Salatin's rhetoric as it is widely available across media, while specifically focusing upon his two most recent books: *Folks, this ain't Normal* (2011) and *The Sheer Ecstasy of being a Lunatic Farmer* (2010). My rhetorical analysis seeks to answer the following questions: first, how does Salatin rhetorically structure his vision for a new agrarian establishment centered on localized food production, which would counter industrial agriculture and its global food trade; and, second, what are the implications as varied food movements work from Salatin's ideological commitments via invoking his rhetorical imaginary and utilizing his material practices? I assert that Salatin constructs a rhetorical imaginary of alternative food production that synthesizes conservative and progressive imperatives relevant to production and consumption, which is accomplished and mobilized via his invocation of *terroir*. Specifically, Salatin articulates an organizing metaphor of Christianity as the soil of life. I argue that Salatin's rhetorical imaginary of alternative food production results in a hybridized discourse that merges neoliberal and progressive imperatives. I seek to contribute to critical rhetorical theory via both extending and challenging current conceptions with respect to how neoliberalism is manifest and operationalized in contemporary contexts; as well as, more broadly, via illuminating further evolutions, intersections, and materializations of discourse.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I present a critical rhetorical analysis that examines appeals made by farmer and author Joel Salatin. I analyze Salatin's rhetoric as it is widely available across media, while specifically focusing upon his two most recent books: *Folks, this ain't normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World* (2011) and *The Sheer Ecstasy of being a Lunatic Farmer* (2010). Salatin is an exceptionally significant "text" to analyze as he has gained prominence as one of the foremost, visible critics of the globalized food system. He has become a resonant voice for broad "mainstream" publics, although he has achieved particular salience with respect to "alternative" food and farming movements. My rhetorical analysis, then, seeks to examine the cultural and political imperatives that drive Salatin's rhetoric. To this end, I endeavor to answer the following questions: first, how does Salatin rhetorically structure his vision for a new agrarian establishment centered on localized food production, which would counter industrial agriculture and its global food trade; and, second, what are the implications as

varied food movements work from Salatin's ideological commitments via invoking his rhetorical imaginary and utilizing his material practices? I assert that Salatin constructs a rhetorical imaginary of alternative food production that results in a hybridized discourse that merges neoliberal and progressive imperatives. This imaginary is structured around Salatin's articulation of "soil" as the figurative and literal source of life, from which "authentic" nourishment grows and which can be distinguished from industrial agribusinesses' tainted soil(s). Salatin's articulations pertaining to "local" alternative food production then function to represent a material and figurative sanctified "*terroir*" from which to solidify and (re)stabilize this hybridized discourse. I seek to contribute to critical rhetorical theory via both widening and challenging current conceptions with respect to how neoliberalism is articulated in relation to consumption, which negotiates cultural anxieties surrounding (re)production, consumption, health and citizenship in novel ways within contested cultural sites. Specifically, I assess Salatin's rhetoric as it functions to inform the disparate critiques of the global food system and the varied calls for its political and social reformations as taken up and articulated within alternative food and farming movements via a hybridized discourse that blends neoliberal imperatives with progressive ones. Thus, this study seeks to contribute not only to the understanding of growing food discourses but also to our understanding of how discourses evolve, change and intersect with one another.

### Rationale

#### Alternative Food Movements

Food production and consumption, including with respect to this project, must be contextualized within the wider socio-economic structures through which food is produced, distributed, and mediated (Fine 2008). Jackson and Thrift (1995) confirmed this notion when they wrote that both the social relations of production and of consumption should be studied as they reciprocally impact one another. In general, these authors are situating critical inquiries into what is commonly referred to as the “food system,” which Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) define as “the entire set of activities and relationships that make up various food pathways from seed to table” (p. 5). In this project, I examine how alternative food discourses take up and rearticulate this food system.

Many food movements operate from theories and practices that share overlapping principles and practices, particularly with regard to contentious concepts such as “sustainability” and biodiversity. These varied food and agriculture movements support modes of food production and consumption that range across: the Slow Food movement, which espouses a reconnection with the flavors of “good,” regional foods over global fast foods, begun primarily with Carlo Petrini’s objections to a McDonald’s restaurant opening in Rome and has expanded to the annual international gathering of Terra Madre, and which uses the term “coproducers” to reference the direct connection between consumers and farmers (Gottlieb & Joshi; Nestle 2007; Nestle 2010; Petrini 2007; Pollan



2006a; Shiva 2007); “civic agriculture,” which is the broad coalition of those who seek to advocate for localized food production, processing and distribution, as it is “tightly linked to a community’s social and economic development,” through the practical organizing and maintenance of farmers markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and community gardens (Lyson 2004; p. 1); “new agrarianism,” which valorizes “a food system centered on small family farmers and the preservation of a so-called rural culture through direct marketing....[which is the] alternative agrifood movement’s...recent iteration of an agrarian populist ideology that, quoting Thomas Jefferson, touted small family farmers as ideal American citizens,” (McCullen 2011, p. 220); permaculturists, whose proponents argue that to be truly sustainable, agriculture must have permanence in location and within the given culture, while maintaining those settlements within nature’s limits so as to ensure a “permanent agriculture” (Hosking 2011; Kaplan & Blume 2011, p. 17; Macaskill 2009, p. 559); “organic” gardeners and farmers who generally espouse only non-synthetic inputs such as organic fertilizers and compost and use of non-genetically modified organisms (GMOs), also known as “transgenic” organisms (Doughtery 2011), which are generally understood as open-pollinated, heirloom seeds (Alterman 2007; Ambrose 2011; Montet & Groussain 2009); and biodynamicists, whose farming/gardening theories and practices are built upon the works of Rudolph Steiner, who proposed that there is an inherent linkage between spiritual realms, celestial patterns, planting and the resultant success (health) or failure (disease) in the production of food, as well as, its inherent nutrient provisioning (Balliet 2011; Lachman 2007; McMahon 2005).

There is significant overlap, if not replication, between these food movements and Salatin's philosophies. Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey (2008) write that social movements, in general, and food movements in particular "mobilize the necessary economic, cultural and socio-political resources" necessary for systemic changes (p. 529), which is assisted in creating such infrastructure partly through "the identification of heroes and role models [for said changes], such as Joel Salatin...who [is often] portrayed in [magazine] articles and books" (p. 551). The rationale for such an examination, then, stems from the general prevalence of food-related discourses, and specifically, Salatin's role as a prominent critic of the current food regime who is representative of viable alternatives to conventional agriculture. *The New York Times* (Purdum 2005, p. 2) wrote that Salatin is:

[T]he high priest of the pasture....one of the natural-food movement's most prolific authors....[whose] services as a motivational speaker and educator are in high demand wherever organic farmers and foodies gather to talk shop....he is a rebel—and an evangelist—at heart. He is also a red-blooded rebuttal to the notion that the sustainable-food movement is a preoccupation of a pampered and unrealistic elite.

This iconic status was soon substantiated and popularized when Salatin was prominently featured throughout Michael Pollan's (2006a) *New York Times* bestselling book, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, as "a happy shepherd....[in whom] the old pastoral ideal is alive," (p. 125). Since then, Salatin has gained cultural prominence and exposure across media, as is apparent via the regularity in which his profiles and quotations are published, relating to his pioneering position within diffuse alternative food movements (Beatley 2010; Coleman 2010; Gayeton & Howard-Gayeton 2012; Hatch 2009; Ostrander 2011; Stiles 2010; Walsh 2011; Wood 2010). These profiles of Salatin, as well as reviews of his books, have been released across an assortment of diverse ideological perspectives

and publications, ranging from *The American Conservative* (McCrary 2009) and *Christian Century* (Wirzba 2007), to *The Atlantic* (Gabor 2011), *National Geographic* (Walls-Thumma 2000) and *Smithsonian* (Shepherd 2000), to *Gourmet* (Estabrook 2008; Pollan 2002), *Mother Earth News* (Phelps 2008) and *Organic Gardening* (Ambrose 2011).

Thus, while Salatin has himself become a sort of social movement phenomenon, his rhetoric has secured and maintained broad significance. This is primarily because Salatin's food-related rhetoric transcends "local" food movements as his appeals resonate and intersect with various causes and issues such as environmental justice, food justice, libertarian governmental deregulation, biotechnology and genetic modification, to name but a few. Salatin's farming methods and his food-related rhetoric have summarily been taken up as the template for various alternative food movements, many of which are working toward influencing the material practices and policies pertaining to food production, allocation and consumption (Ambrose 2011; Balliet 2011; Hosking 2011).

Through their affirmations of Salatin as a "hero and role model," and invocations of his material practices and his rhetorical imaginary, varied food movements reflect and operationalize his ideological commitments, whether or not they are aware of what those commitments may entail. And yet, while Salatin's rhetoric has been widely taken up across media, there has been a dearth of critical attention given to the implications of his neo-agrarian imaginary. I undertook various academic database searches, which produced five scholarly articles across disparate disciplines, each of which critiqued Salatin only as a brief auxiliary to the main thrust of the respective articles (Deutsch 2011; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Stanescu 2010; Taylor 2011). One goal of this

undertaking, then, is to enhance understanding of increasingly prevalent and influential food movement rhetoric by closely examining a, if not the, key figure associated with that movement writ large.

### Literature Review

#### Discourse and Rhetoric

This study examines discourse insofar as scholars define it as “extended language use” (Anderson 1996, p. 51) and, more specifically, the “patterns of language across texts as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur” (Paltridge 2006, p. 1). Discourse has also been theorized to be what renders “meaningful every aspect of our social, cultural, political environment....discourse is what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one” (Blommaert 2005, p. 4). This study of discourse also draws heavily upon Foucault’s (1980) conception of discourse and power, as it is the linguistic performance of political action:

Discourses are not at once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable processes whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance, and a starting point for an opposing strategy. *Discourse transmits and produces power*; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (emphasis added, pp. 100-101)

Thus, starting from this theoretical standpoint, I assess Joel Salatin’s rhetoric as it draws from intersections of varied political, economic, health, and religious discourses so as to assess how Salatin’s texts function to transmit and (re)produce power. This is also relevant to my analysis as Joel Salatin’s various texts are “enmeshed in a turbulent stream

of multiple and conflictual discourses that shape what these [texts] mean in particular contexts,” (DeLuca & Demo 2000, p. 242). DeLuca and Demo (2000) write that these discourses inform various rhetorics, which are significant to a critical inquiry insofar as “rhetoric is defined as the mobilization of signs for the articulation of identities, ideologies, consciousnesses, communities, publics, and cultures” (p. 253). Thus, examining Salatin’s rhetorical articulations, which draw from multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses, may provide insight into how power functions in complex and dynamic ways so as to accordingly resist and (re)produce power with regard to identities, ideologies, cultures, communities and citizenship with respect to discourses in general and to discourses around food, in particular.

#### Food Discourses

This theoretical conception of power relations between discourse, rhetoric and context is particularly relevant to this study as critical scholars have identified food discourses as pertinent texts for inquiry into the communicative navigation of contested cultural sites. Critical assessments of food discourses may illuminate “the power and politics of representation and...the potential of food and foodways as sophisticated ideological signifiers” (LeBesco & Naccarato 2008, p. 5). Retzinger (2008) also located the cultural significance of such discourses insofar as: “Food has long since ceased to function in a merely nutritive role....The material fact of food and its prominence in our daily lives is matched in equal measure by the messages it relays regarding social class, ethnicity, gender, regional or national identity, religious beliefs and practices” (p. 150). Lindenfeld (2011) concurs, theorizing that discourses relating to food “constitute a highly

contested arena in which cultural, social, economic, and political tensions converge.... Discourses on food occur in a complex web of communication in which debates about citizenship, culture, identity, economics and politics intertwine“ (pp. 3-4).

Cramer et al. (2011) then situate the particular exigency for communication scholars in general, and specifically critical cultural scholars, to examine the cultural and political implications of various food discourses:

If food has become increasingly important within our processes of communication as a means of expression, manifestation of identities, form of discourse and ritual, hallmark of social relationships, *and* if food is ubiquitous then it is for these *very* reasons that we need to more closely consider how food and its practices operate as a means of communication. Furthermore, there is a need for communication scholars to apply our unique methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of food. In this sense, we believe communication studies can offer new insights into how food provides much more than nourishment, or mere sustenance, because food demonstrates a whole host of social, cultural, and political phenomena. (emphasis original, p. xiv)

It can be theorized then that food discourses function as a “manifestation of culture...[which conveys] meanings related to identity, ethnicity, nationhood, gender, class, sexuality and religion” (Cramer 2011, p. 317). Thus, a critical study of food discourses is warranted, as evidenced by Bell and Valentine’s (1997) writing, which resonates with Foucault’s conception of power, insofar as: “Food can be a form of resistance, a form of discipline, of reward, a way of creating ‘community’” (p. 100). Thus, food discourses, as well as, the material implications they have in relation to food policies as well as various production, distribution and consumption practices, offer particularly meaningful texts to critically examine so as to engage with the rhetorical transmission and (re)production of power.

## “Alternative” Food Discourses

Allen (2004) writes of power in specific relation to alternative food movements: “the primary power of social movements is discursive, that is, it lies substantially in their ability to challenge dominant perspectives and priorities by raising new issues, changing popular consciousness, and opening new arenas of public policy” (p. 6). In other words, in order to assess how social movements relating to food concurrently resist and retain power, scholars must critically engage their discourse(s) as their primary mode of social, cultural and political power. To this end, I engage varied alternative food discourses as thematically homogenous insofar as the predominant aspect of such discourse coalesces around redressing the global food system, which comes under scrutiny by proponents of alternative food systems with regard to evaluating the scale and transparency of the system, as well as, its utilization of various private and public resources as possible options for structural reform (Allen 2004; Altieri 2010; Bello & Baviera 2010; Click & Ridberg 2010; Durham & Oberholtzer 2010; Friedland, Ransom & Wolf 2010; Friedmann 2005; Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Holt Gimenez & Shattuck 2011; Lyson 2004; Murphy 2010; Rosset 2010; Shiva 2007; Tanaka & Mooney 2010; Tovey 2008).

While there are immense variations regarding particular goals, conceptual definitions, and practical implementations of agricultural alternatives, scholars have recognized the rise of alternative farming and food movements as coalescing into a relatively coherent discourse (Allen 2004; Allen 2010; Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Cramer 2011; Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2011; Lyson 2004; Tanaka & Mooney 2010; Tovey 2008). Tovey (2008) locates how various alternative food movements align based upon their rather consistent and particular

discourse (p. 6), insofar as they seek “change through cultural as well as political innovation—restructuring values, personal identities, and cultural symbols, contributing to the emergence of alternative life-styles,” specifically, in relation to food production and allocation (p. 3). Thus, in line with other scholars, I assess myriad alternative food movements through a singular, resonant discourse that opposes the current configuration of the globalized food system.

This alternative food movement discourse generally configures the “conventional” agricultural system as being an unwieldy, destructive globalized system of food production and distribution, which is run by heartless corporate agribusinesses.<sup>i</sup> This is termed within the literature as the “corporate food regime,” which is:

[C]haracterized by the unprecedented power and profits of monopoly agrifood corporations, globalized animal protein chains, growing links between food and fuel economies, a ‘supermarket revolution’, liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership, a shrinking natural resource base, and growing opposition from food movements worldwide. (Holt Gimenez & Shattuck 2011, p. 111)

Thus, alternative food movements broadly characterize the conventional food system—which Friedman (2005) deemed a “corporate-environmental food regime” with its “selective appropriation” of progressive environmental issues and demands (p. 229)—as a destructive, unsustainable, inequitable and problematic system that needs be reformed.

Opponents also argue that governmental policies and provisions allow huge corporate agribusinesses to dominate the food and agriculture industries from providing for monopolistic advantages to buying up the farms of small-scale, local producers who are unable to compete within the immensely asymmetrical system that has endured for decades. Thus, the entire food system, also commonly referred to as “food chains,” comes under scrutiny by proponents of alternative food systems with regard to evaluating



the scale and transparency of the overall system, as well as, its deployment of various private and public resources as possible options for systemic reform (Durham & Oberholtzer 2010).

The general characterization of the alternative food movements and their farming practices are such that they are beneficial and antithetical to the injustices of the conventional farming system. Allen (2010) situates these alternative food movements in relation to their opposition to the conventional, global food system:

In the face of an increasingly globalized political economy, contemporary social movements have turned to discourses and strategies of localization as a solution to a host of problems. Among social movements promoting localization are the alternative agrifood social movements, such as those for sustainable agriculture and community food security....[whose goals] of local food efforts generally include providing markets for local farmers and food producers, reversing the decline in the number of family farms, creating local jobs, reducing environmental degradation and protecting farmland. (pp. 295-296)

Taken as a whole, this opposition encompasses what is now often referred to as “food justice,” which is the perspective that advocates for alternatives to the conventional food system must remember that the critical goal of structural change begins with how food is produced in the fields and extends to the food on each persons plate (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010, p. 133).

Thus, by comparison, local agriculture with its transparency and traceability (Bennet 2010; Coff et al., 2008; Lees 2008; Levinson 2009) model of producing “whole” foods are configured as being more healthy, just, beneficial and “safe” for consumers, farmers/farm workers and the environment than conventional agriculture with its “processed” foods (Atkins & Bowler 2001, Bennet 2010; Coff et al. 2008, DeSoucey & Techoueyres 2009, Levinson 2009, Nestle 2010, Pollan 2006a). This is partly due to the

fact that while food has been a significant and relevant cultural, political, economic and social issue throughout history, the expansion of agribusinesses and the publicity of industrial farming practices have created newfound concerns over the safety of food due to the lack of transparency within the globalized system (Paarlberg, 2011). McEntee (2011) surmised that this is because the ability to make “*informed choices* throughout one’s food provisioning experience,” has been jeopardized by such a sizeable system (emphasis original, p. 242). These characterizations then situate alternative farming practices as the material and figurative resistance to the colossally destructive, unhealthy and unjust system of conventional food production, distribution and consumption.

#### Neoliberal Discourse(s)

Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as: “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). While much has been written in recent years about the shift toward neoliberalism, it is not new in theory nor is new in its practical application. It is argued that neoliberalism, a term coined by German sociologist and economist Alexander Rustow in 1938 (Hartwhich 2009; p. 6), took form in the early 1930s, when severe economic depressionary crises were affecting various developed nations; intellectuals and politicians sought solutions through systemic economic and political reformations, regulations and redistributions, which were later deemed to be modes of neoliberal governmentality (Denord 2009; Hartwhich 2009; Jackson 2010). In recent years a number of critics across disciplines have revitalized the

concept, identifying neoliberalism as driving contemporary discourses surrounding consumption and production (Chomsky 1999; Gilbert 2008; Harvey 2005; Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005). Harvey (2005) characterizes current theorizing about patterns and ideologies around production and consumption:

‘[Neoliberalism] had to be backed up by a practical strategy that emphasized the liberty of consumer choice, not only with respect to particular products but also with respect to lifestyles, modes of expression and a wide range of cultural practices. Neoliberalization required both politically and economically the construction of a neoliberal market-based populist culture of differential consumerism and individual libertarianism’ (p. 42).

Sender (2006) relates this discourse of neoliberalism with respect to articulations of consumption as involving shifts from authoritarian government to individual responsibility; from injunction to expert advice; and from centralized government to quasi-governmental agencies.

Critics have accordingly identified neoliberal imperatives within food and agriculture discourses as well (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Bello & Bavaria 2010; Bunton and Burrows 1995; Gonzalez 2004; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman and DuPuis 2006; Jarosz 2011; Kleinman & Kinchy 2007; McMichael 2010; Pechlaner & Otero 2008). Scholars have also recognized that neoliberal ideologies surrounding individuals’ responsibility to consume properly produced, value-added, differentiated foods has been figuratively produced, enacted and consumed through both mainstream and alternative food discourses (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Goldfrank 2005; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman and DuPuis 2006). Bunton and Burrows (1995) specifically stipulate that this

is due in part to the “new public health,” which now expands the scope of neoliberal healthism as “oriented towards the social body” (p. 204), insofar as the “contemporary citizen is increasingly attributed with responsibilities to ceaselessly maintain and improve his or her own health...[by acting] upon the recommendations of a whole range of ‘experts’ and ‘advisers’ located in a range of *diffuse* institutional and cultural sites” (emphasis original, p. 205).

Thus, many of the recommendations pertaining to “proper” food consumption come from experts and advisers from various cultural sites so as to educate the public about how best to maintain individual health and safety as well as the health and safety of the nation (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Guthman & DuPuis 2006; Guttman & Resler 2001; Jones 2001; Patel 2007; Shugart 2011).

These neoliberal discourses are theorized to function hegemonically, and specifically, in terms of defining the problem via a lack of consumer information about safely produced foods. Thus, the possibilities for alternatives to the current food system are manifest through better informed consumption. Guthman (2011) writes:

In keeping with the idolatry of the market, neoliberal governmentality encourages subjects to make few demands on the state but rather to act through the market, or like the market, by exercising consumer choice, being entrepreneurial and self-interested...neoliberalism has thus contributed to the idea that health is a personal responsibility more than a social one. (p. 18)

This also serves to frame articulations regarding what the proper consumables are, as well as, the people who may provide these alternative solutions. Guthman (2011) situates how these neoliberal conceptions function, specifically within alternative food movement rhetoric:

[P]articular definition[s] of ‘real food’ [have] come to occupy a privileged place in discourse...reflected in the tendency among adherents...to lump together all aspects of the current food system that are bad and assume goodness in opposition to them....Furthermore, by exalting a set of food choices, the alternative-food movement tends to give rise to a missionary impulse, so those who are attracted to this food and movement want to spread the gospel. Seeing their food choices as signs of heightened ethicality, they see social change as making people become like them ....[and in so doing,] *the alternative-food movement has been far too complicit in the neoliberal agenda, with the effect (not the intention) of producing self-satisfied eaters.* (emphasis added, pp. 141-142)

This line of reasoning situates the individual consumer, operating within free markets that have allowed for some manifestation of free trade, as having been propped up by neoliberal compulsions as the primary mode of food system reformation.

While I recognize aspects of neoliberal imperatives occurring within Joel Salatin’s articulations, I argue that his articulations of food system alternatives are not quite so simple. This project departs from the characterization of Joel Salatin and, more broadly, alternative food movements as simply reflecting and reproducing neoliberal sensibilities and directives. Specifically, I contend that Salatin constructs a rhetorical imaginary of alternative food production that results in a hybridized discourse that merges aspects of neoliberal imperatives with progressive imperatives. This imaginary is structured around Salatin’s articulation of “soil” as the source of life, from which “authentic” nourishment grows and which can be distinguished from the tainted soils produced by industrial agribusinesses. Salatin’s articulations pertaining to “local” alternative food production then function to represent a particularly distinct sanctified “*terroir*” from which to solidify and (re)stabilize this hybridized discourse.

A notable aspect of rhetorically constructing “real” or “authentic” food is to relate it to the earlier notion of being able to trace where a food come from and by whom it was

produced. This process of authentication of food and farmer has also been situated in relation to the place, specifically particular soils, where it was produced. This notion of distinction, based on particular soil properties and cultivation methods that affect the quality and taste of food, is known as *terroir* (Diamant 2010; Douguet & O'Connor 2003; Guy 2010; Trubek 2008). As defined by Trubek (2008), *terroir* is “the taste of place [in a food product]...[and] the notion that the natural environment can shape the taste” (p. 2). Trubek (2008) relates *terroir* to conceptions about food production and consumption insofar as it may reveal what matters, as well as, “how [it] *informed* everyday choices ...[about the] *place* where the [food] came from and the methods used in their creation...[which] created *distinctive tastes*” (emphasis original, pp. 3-4). *Terroir*, according to Trubek (2008), “has been used to explain agriculture for centuries, but its association with taste, place, and quality is more recent, a reaction to changing markets, changing organization of farming, and changing politics” (p. 22). Trubek (2008) writes: “The agrarian roots of the movement to create protection for place and products situate...*terroir*” (p. 26). This study, then, takes up *terroir* so as to examine Salatin’s articulations of “soil” as the source of life, from which “authentic” nourishment grows and which can be distinctly distinguished from industrial agribusinesses’ contaminated and sterile soil(s). Salatin’s articulations pertaining to alternative food production function to configure a sanctified *terroir* from which to solidify and (re)stabilize this hybridized discourse.

### Methodology

This study undertakes a critical rhetorical approach in order to assess the power dynamics within the textualization of intersecting discourses. This methodology entails rhetorical analysis, which is informed by a critical cultural studies perspective to “explicate how texts function to produce meaning,” and how those meanings then function to convey cultural ideologies relating to dimensions of specific ideologies such as gender, race, class and so forth (Kellner; 2003; p. 14). With regard to critical analysis and the theoretical underpinnings of power that I have previously mentioned, I operate from the contention of Owen and Ehrenhaus (1993), who wrote: “the politics of representation is the central concern of the critical study of rhetoric” (p. 170). Specifically, I assess Salatin’s articulations as texts via McGee’s (1990) conception that texts are “fragments” that are “dense reconstruction[s] of all the bits of other discourses from which [they were] made....[as the fragment is] part of an arrangement that includes all facts, events, texts, and stylized expressions deemed useful in explaining its influence” (p. 279).

This method allows for an examination of how ideology and power function rhetorically to negotiate and legitimize cultural constructions as though they are “normal, natural or essential”. This method also takes up the aspiration of examining how power “flows, circulates, and defines relationships among subjects...to see that power has both a creative and repressive function” (Ono & Sloop; 1992; p. 50). In other words, a critical rhetorical approach assumes that power can be articulated in dynamic, novel ways to rhetorically function as a response to challenges of dominant ideologies; those specific cultural and political notions of what is normal may then be enriched and strengthened

through such dynamic articulations (Shugart, 2003). Thus, I utilize this method to address power and ideology in relation to how articulations pertaining to farming, food and consumption navigate cultural anxieties surrounding (re)production, consumption, health and citizenship in novel ways within contested cultural sites.

I seek to contribute to critical rhetorical theory, then, via widening and challenging current conceptions with particular respect to how political and ideological imperatives are articulated and mobilized in dynamic and overlapping ways. Specifically, I assess Salatin's rhetoric as it functions to inform varied critiques of the global food system as taken up and articulated by alternative food and farming movements through their invocations of Salatin's hybridized discourse. Thus, this study seeks to contribute not only to the understanding of increasingly prevalent and significant food discourses but also to our understanding of how discourses evolve, influence, change and intersect.

I analyze Salatin's rhetoric as it is widely available across media from online accessible speaking engagements and interviews to his writings in magazines and books, from the publication of his first book in 1995 to his most recent works. I have focused primarily upon his two most recent books: *Folks, this ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World* (2011) and *The Sheer Ecstasy of being a Lunatic Farmer* (2010). Salatin is an exceptionally significant "text" to analyze as he has gained prominence as one of the foremost visible critics of the globalized food system and has become a resonant voice for broad "mainstream" publics, though he has achieved particular salience with respect to "alternative" food and farming movements.



When beginning this study, I initially perceived Salatin's rhetoric as simply taking up neoliberal imperatives through a highly conservative platform. His rhetoric seems to fit other scholars' conceptions of the neoliberal turn in food and agriculture, including some of the rhetoric within various alternative food movements (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Bunton & Burrows 1995; Goldfrank 2005; Gonzalez 2004; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman & DuPuis 2006; Jarosz 2011; Kleinman & Kinchy 2007; Pechlaner & Otero 2008). Salatin's religious bent has also been noted by Guthman (2007a), who, while critiquing the lack of intellectual rigorousness on the part of author Michael Pollan, writes the only scholarly critique of Salatin that I could find pertaining to his religious and politically conservative practices and perspectives:

Given [Pollan's] neglect of collective efforts, whether in knowledge productions or elsewhere, is it really all that surprising that Pollan's hero is the anti-statist, unabashedly conservative, and rigidly local (never mind that Salatin's customers drive 150 miles each [way] to pick up a chicken or two)? Pollan dismisses Salatin's brash write-off of New York City and treats Salatin's deep Christianity as epiphenomenal, but I'm not convinced these ideas can be separated. (p. 263)

Thus, I sought to explore Joel Salatin's rhetoric in more detail than the scholarly contentions that alternative food movement discourses, generally, were operating on neoliberal practices. To do so, I identified three staple nodes of neoliberalism that are arguably apparent within Salatin's rhetoric—personal responsibility, expert injunction and consumption as fulfillment. I further investigated these in order to assess how they play out in his rhetoric, and my analysis chapters take up each of these nodes, respectively. My findings depart from my original perceptions and those of critics who have asserted that neoliberal imperatives drive the alternative food movement(s) more

broadly; rather, I argue that Salatin's rhetoric blends these neoliberal imperatives with progressive ones to craft a hybridized discourse that is operationalized through *terroir*.

## CHAPTER II

### HUSBANDING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Individual responsibility is a key theme of neoliberalism, particularly as it relates to the priority given to individual consumption as the primary mode of governmentality and regulation of varying economic, political and social relations (Gilbert 2008; Harvey 2005; Sender 2006; Shugart 2010). This ideology hegemonically situates the proper consumption of services and goods as the individual responsibility in lieu of structural governance, regulation or oversight. This imperative is articulated within mainstream and alternative food discourses as it relates to individual responsibility to consume properly produced, value-added, differentiated foods as a means to administer health and wellness (Goldfrank 2005, p. 43). These food discourses then operate in conjunction with notions of healthism and lifestylism, which situate individual responsibility as the primary mode through which the public can attain health (Crawford 1980; Lupton 1994). To this end, McEntee (2011) surmises that this attainment of health is articulated within food discourses as the ability to make “*informed choices* throughout one’s food provisioning experience” (emphasis original, p. 242). And, as food consumption is a material necessity, food discourses comprise an ideal site for negotiating cultural tensions

surrounding issues such as consumption, health, community and citizenship.

Specifically, these discourses engage and configure what constitutes normal, healthy and safe practices of food production and consumption in ways that align with neoliberal imperatives of individual agency, choice and responsibility.

In this chapter, I argue that through *terroir*, the neoliberal notion of individual responsibility is reconfigured as stewardship over particularized domain, specifically in the rhetoric of Joel Salatin, who is widely understood as a representative of various alternative food and farming movements (Gayeton & Howard-Gayeton 2012; Pollan 2006a; Purdum 2005; Walsh 2011; Wood 2010). In other words, the neoliberal imperative of individual agency is articulated via notions of individual farmers administering their distinctive and unique land and animals in order to properly produce “good” food for the health of individuals, communities and the nation. As this is taken up within alternative food discourses, the intimate knowledge and connections the farmers have to the soil, specifically as they cultivate it and replenish in specific ways over time to render it special, is configured as the key measure as to how food is distinguished as “good”: via the farmer, as steward of the land and animals. The individual citizen is symmetrically ascribed the responsibility, per a sort of stewardship by proxy, to make informed decisions in seeking out and consuming foods that were produced in the distinctive soil(s) of these farmers.

I argue that these seemingly reformist alternative food discourses, which further engage alternative discourses of health and the environment, intersect with neoliberal imperatives regarding consumption, consumer choice and market freedoms through neo-regulation. This emergent discourse represents a hybridization of progressive and

neoliberal imperatives. Within this hybridized discourse, blatant individualism is assuaged via *terroir* as it situates consumption within consecrated natural, even mystical, processes while maintaining the agency of the farmer and the consumer, thus articulating proper consumption with the progressive imperative of restoration.

### Christianing the Land

#### Ordained Heritage

When Salatin was four years old, his parents bought a degraded tract of Virginia farmland that lacked any usable topsoil, had severe erosion problems and was riddled with thistles and weeds (Pollan 2006a; Salatin 2010; Salatin 2011); yet, after 40 years of cultivating the land there is now a wealth of topsoil, the erosion problems are gone, the grasses are strong and vigorous as it now “is one of the most productive and influential alternative farms in America,” (Pollan 2006a, p. 126; Salatin 2010; Salatin 2011).

Salatin’s mother, wife, children and grandchildren all live on the family farm, which provides almost all of the food the family consumes. Salatin (2010) writes:

Our four generations living on the farm is perhaps my single greatest blessing. Surrounded by this emerald farm in God’s creative crown, surrounded by abundance in the fields, the gardens, and the basement larder, feasting on compost-grown, pasture-raised food minimally prepared in our home kitchen, communing with family—this is normal. This is connection, foundation, heritage, tradition....On many levels, I am struck by the sheer abnormality of our situation...I’d like us to think broadly and deeply about how to restore normalcy, to reincorporate those foundations that sustain cultures—by using what we know and what we have in ways that honor and respect those upon whose shoulders we stand. (pp. xv-xvi)

Salatin (2010) writes about how his father was an alternative farmer long before it was in vogue: “Dad was smart enough to spurn every one of those expert opinions....Only a

lunatic would embark on such a contrarian course. Neighbors laughed us to scorn” (p. 9). Thus, Salatin’s heritage is founded upon a tradition of cultivating land and animals in ways that were considered by others to be abnormal but that enriched the soil, regardless of the general acceptance of their methods. Salatin’s articulations postulate that reincorporating this model of generational family labor, such as his, will restore normalcy to our food production and our culture. This serves to situate Salatin as having earned his dominion over land and nature via the generational cultivation of his specific *terroir*. This aligns with the traditional definition of *terroir* as noted by Douguet and O’Connor (2003):

French communities that constitute their identity by locality, by regional appurtenance, by their territorial inheritance, and their *terroir*...tend to identify features of their food, cuisine, buildings and wider habitats....This suggests that, in order to appraise issues of sustainability or non-sustainability, we should consider perceived threats to the integrity of these patrimonial values and the collective transmission of meanings. (p. 238)

Salatin (2010) writes: “Although my parents never earned a living from the farm, they laid a foundation, an ethic, indeed a vision” (p. xiv). This legacy of labor created the productive soil on Salatin’s farm over many years through composting all of the farm’s waste, backfilling arroyos, creating ponds, rotationally grazing livestock, chickens and pigs on the farm’s grasses by moving the animals to new pasture everyday, which Salatin (2001) calls “biomimicry” that utilizes manure as the “beyond organic” fertilizer that makes the entire system possible (p. 112). In other words, starting with Salatin’s father and continuing with him and his son, these farmers have labored for the last 40 years to cultivate what he calls their “heritage-based farm,” into the celebrated, preeminent farm that it is now (Salatin 2010; p. 255).

Salatin's articulations of inheritance are in alignment with theologian and agrarian academic Norman Wirzba's (2011) conception of Biblical notions of God supporting the righteous, ordained farmers who labor to replace the thistles and thorns with life-sustaining fruits:

In [Isaiah 27:2-6] Isaiah is...referring to a vineyard that fails to produce good grapes. That vineyard is destroyed and made desolate. It is deprived of rain, and only thistles and thorns grow. In Isaiah's mind, the house of Israel is a garden called to produce beautiful plants of justice and mercy. *The Israelite garden, however, produces instead the injustice of the wealthy who consolidate resources into the hands of a few, the arrogance of a people who take no notice of the world as God's gift, and the deception of those who call evil good and good evil...The Israelite garden has become infested with life-choking weeds, while Israelite gardening has departed from the gardening practices of God that yield delightful and healthy fruit. The Israelites cannot produce good fruit because their soil is bad and their inspiration for work is of the wrong kind.* (emphasis added, p. 65)

Thus, Salatin's articulations situate his earned dominion as a sanctified heritage of connecting with and enriching the land after decades of toil in one location toward the betterment of the soil and the people who consume his foods. Salatin also makes it clear that he has enjoyed undertaking this difficult task of transforming the land. Salatin (2011) states, "I just wanted to farm. I loved the farm. I loved chopping thistles—back when we used to have them" (p. xiii).

As Salatin articulates it, his family's generational heritage of sanctified alternative farming has broad cultural and spiritual implications, similar to those that affected the Israelites who chose instead to produce injustice and inequitable wealth:

Amazingly, the farms that dump chemicals, dope their animals, confine their animals in factory farms without fresh air, sunshine, and salad bar are now considered normal and I'm the lunatic. As the industrial food system grows, I realize more and more how different my paradigm is, on many levels. We are not simply a preference apart. We are not just different nuances of the same thing. We are on different planets. In fact, we are on a

collision course. We are at war. I believe some things are right and some things are wrong. I think some ideas are right and some are wrong. I think a dark side does exist. And I don't want to be a part of it. (Salatin 2010; p. xiv)

Thus, the years of farming his land in opposition to the conventional dictates of modern agricultural practices has positioned Salatin as the preeminent individual who can articulate what properties in soil distinguish “good” food from “bad” and “good” food from “evil” food. This underwrites Salatin’s individual agency as he alternatively farms his land based upon this traditionally “normal,” sanctified heritage.

These articulations of Salatin’s food as imbued with unique, distinguishable qualitative value directly derived from the soil in which it was produced illustrates *terroir*. Accordingly, Salatin’s responsible control over land and nature affords him legitimacy and dominion over what qualifies as good, healthy, desirable and “normal” foods. Thus, these articulations inventively synthesize the neoliberal conception of individual responsibility with progressive notions of connection to nature, effectively moralizing individual dominion and resulting in the figure of the farmer as steward. This functions to elide the structural constraints of reforming the food system while situating farmers such as Salatin as the sanctified ones who should enrich the soil to save our health and culture, as long as we individually choose to opt out of conventional agriculture and consume their “properly” produced foods.

Salatin (2011) situates this “heritage agrarian wisdom,” as one that allows one:

To interact with nature and food in this visceral functional way [that] is foundational to developing common sense. When people lose touch with these cornerstones of existence, their thinking gets all screwy. Staying grounded, very literally, and staying anchored in sensibleness require relationships with food production. (p. 39)



### Toiling Toward Strategic Cultivation

Joel Salatin's rhetoric also reflects this hybridized discourse that reconfigures individual responsibility as dominion as it is operationalized by the labor of individual farmers. This, again, is navigated through *terroir* insofar as the individual farmer toils to restore degraded soil and cultivate it into a productive and healing medium for healthy foods. This serves to situate the dominion of the individual farmer as earned through the complementarity of ordination and vigilance, as conveyed through rhetorically situating the alternative farmer in two intersecting and overlapping ways with respect to the heritage of family farms: first, the cultivation of the soil over generations, which demonstrates the intimate knowledge and connection to specific *terroir* as a sort of birthright of these individuals; second, this generational cultivation is the result of strategic management of the inputs that have enriched the soil, the animals, the seeds, and the resulting food over those decades of cultivation. These hybridized articulations are navigated via *terroir* as it relates to distinctly special, even "sacred," land as the result of the mystical relationship and alliance between the owner and exalted nature; the farmer as owner then becomes conflated with his land and soil.

In laboring at such alternative, "beyond organic" soil cultivation practices, Salatin is continuing in his father's tradition of doing what is right by making tough decisions pertaining to his stewardship. Salatin learned to cultivate the soil through these unconventional and often unpopular means in order to properly manage his farm and his animals in ways that acknowledge that the "life, death, decomposition, regeneration cycle is both physically and ecologically fundamental and profoundly spiritual" (Salatin 2011; p. 113). Salatin's farming choices and soil management practices are then materially

consumed by individuals as they eat Salatin's food as well as ideologically consumed and (re)articulated via the alternative food discourses that are informed by his perspectives and practices.

Salatin (2011) references what he views as the unfortunate recession of the linkage between individual family farmers and consumers: "With the advent of the supermarket and the abdication of personal food responsibility, the entire fabric of the local food system has been lost" (p. 81). In other words, as consumers have lost their connection to the farmers who make the "right" decisions, regardless of how unconventional they might appear to be, it has resulted in the loss of healthy, nourishing locally produced foods. Thus, Salatin (2007) contends that this scarcity in heritage-based family farms is firmly rooted in the lack of individual accountability and responsibility when it comes to doing what is right versus what is normal or accepted:

How much evil throughout history could have been avoided had people exercised their moral acuity with convictional courage and said to the powers that be, 'No, I will not. This is wrong, and I don't care if you fire me, shoot me, pass me over for promotion, or call my mother, I will not participate in this unsavory activity.' Wouldn't world history be rewritten if just a few people had actually acted like individual free agents rather than mindless lemmings? (p. 182)

Through the many years of careful design and management of the farm by making unconventional decisions, Salatin (2011) has been able to transform "the most eroded, gullied, decrepit—did I say cheap?—farm anywhere" (p. xii) into what Michael Pollan called "one of the most productive and influential alternative farms in America" (Pollan 2006a, p. 126). Salatin (2011) says that this was accomplished precisely because of his "soil building, ecological innovation, and a lifetime of swimming the wrong way" (p. xiii). Due to these rogue farming methods, Salatin has been hailed as "a hero to young

Americans who are taking up the farming lifestyle,” because of the dramatic restoration of his farmland, which was based on this strategic decision-making regarding his soil enrichment (Walsh 2011, p. 54).

This pattern of articulating Salatin’s alternative and innovative methods with its outcome of fertile soil manages to mobilize and integrate the notions of heritage and labor through *terroir*. These articulations then rhetorically function to reconfigure individual responsibility as dominion as it is operationalized by Salatin, which concurrently serves to locate the source of the soils’ distinguishable characteristics and qualitative value, as per *terroir*, with Salatin’s labor. Salatin himself then embodies this conception of *terroir* insofar as he has physically labored at adding value to his food through cultivating soil that has been distinctively vintaged over decades. Thus, the rhetorical utilization of individual responsibility for consumption, articulated with the progressive imperatives of improving the environment through mitigating past injustices and increasing the resiliency of the earth, serve to create a hybridized neoliberal/progressive discourse within alternative food and farming rhetorics.

#### One with the Land

Salatin’s rhetoric positions the farmer as healer via the ameliorative practices that are rhetorically articulated as both visionary and mystical. And while Salatin is considered to be one of the nation’s prominent alternative farmers for various reasons, his practice of what he calls “grass farming” is a primary example of his innovative, yet traditionally sanctified methods. As Salatin explains it, he centers his farms’ functionality on feeding his animals by allowing them to graze on grasses, which is why he refers to his cows’ flesh as “salad bar beef” as opposed to the heavily grain-based diets

of industrial animal feedlots. This practice, he asserts, then nourishes the soil by strengthening the root systems of the grasses, which keeps erosion in check, sequesters carbon in the root mass and later provides for the natural replenishment of the soil by naturally incorporating compost via manure. Salatin (2010) locates what he sees as the origin and sanctified authenticity of this practice when he writes:

[Grass farming is] as ancient as history. Far more primal than grain farming. Some Biblical scholars look at the curse of Adam and Eve in Eden and point out that the woman's curse was the pain of child bearing and the man's curse was tilling the ground—indicating that prior to that time, grain had not been growing. (p. 16)

Salatin (2011) positions his practices as the natural, normal and ordained practices of the regeneration of life through death and sacrifice:

The fact that life requires sacrifice has profound spiritual implications. In order for something to live, something else must die. And that should provide us a lesson in how we serve one another and the creation and Creator around us. Everything is eating and being eaten. The perpetual sacrifice of one thing creates life for the rest. To see this as regenerative is both mature and normal. To see it as violence that must be stopped is both abnormal and juvenile.

To take this one step further, I would even suggest that the sacrifice is elevated to sacredness based on the respect and honor bestowed on the sacrifice during its life....The life well lived bestows upon the sacrifice its sacredness. And so how the chicken or carrot or cabbage lives defines the life's value consummated in the act of death—chomping, masticating, burying in our intestines to regenerate flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. That no life can exist without sacrifice is a profound physical and spiritual truth. And the better the life, the greater the sacrifice. (pp. 24-25)

Salatin often invokes this sense of profound, divine guidance as the source of his knowledge and his connection to *terroir*. He writes:

Knowing what to fear is the first step in knowing what to fix. I fear that we are bringing into our world a whole generation revved up on hubris, who think they have the world by the tail. Solomon, generally described as the wisest man who ever lived, said in the biblical book of Proverbs, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' If this doesn't denote

appreciating the gravity of the situation, I don't know what does....Cultivating this habit of awareness and responding to its nuances allow the gardener to enter a world of mystery and grandeur. Ultimately, all gardeners realize that their landscape depends on something much bigger than themselves...ultimately impressing on the gardener a palpable humility toward this divine ecological umbilical. (p. 15)

These Biblically ordained practices and principles are foundational aspects of Salatin's food and farming rhetoric, as he is a 1979 graduate of Bob Jones University (BJU), who was recently honored with their "alumnus of the year award" (BJU)<sup>ii</sup>. Salatin conceives of current industrial agribusinesses' particularly unnatural practice of raising grains and feeding them to ruminant animals as a sinful practice, particularly in comparison to his practices of enriching the soil and the animals by following natural cycles of (re)production. Salatin (2010) writes of his grass farming:

I'm well aware that more often than not human understanding of this ancient carbon-accumulating dance has either been misunderstood, spurned, or adulterated. Overgrazing and carbon depletion is, unfortunately, far more normal than carbon accumulation....Men swagger around calling themselves 'cattlemen' but abuse their grass like a rapist....we see ourselves as the earth's true physicians. (pp. 19-20)

These articulations serve to position farmers like Salatin, who employ these sanctified methods of cultivating land and animals, as men who embody this profound bond with and knowledge of their soil. This positions *terroir* as a marker associating the foods produced in such a manner with a hallowed taste, place, and quality, which references the distinct soil in which these foods are produced as well as the individual farmer who resisted the contaminated methods of industrial agriculture. Thus, *terroir* functions to (re)configure individual responsibility for health and wellness as inextricably articulated with the individual farmers' dominion, which contributes to the hybridization of neoliberal and progressive discourses within the articulations of alternative food

discourses. This hybridized discourse is operationalized through strengthening the linkage of private ownership and stewardship of the land as the means by which the food system should be reformed. This serves to preserve the imperative of individuals consuming foods that were properly produced by these agricultural reformers toward attaining health and healing for themselves, their communities, the nation and the ecosystem.

A primary way in which the individual imperative is realized within Salatin's rhetoric is via the motifs of forgiveness and resiliency accorded and husbanded by the farmer. To this end, Salatin advocates overhauling the current mass-scale industrial food system and replacing it with local food systems that serve to provide food within local "bioregions," as farmers like Salatin better the environment through "beyond-organically" enriching the soil. Salatin (2010) writes: "I believe our responsibilities as stewards of the land is to build more forgiveness into the landscape....It's our responsibility to bring cleverness and ingenuity to the landscape so it's more resilient" (p. 62). The resiliency he writes of pertains to material abilities of the soil such as its absorption and retention of moisture, its nourishment of plants, and its allowance of roots to burrow deeply enough that plants can grow tall and wide in order for the soil to allow an innate "forgiveness" to the plants if drought hits or when the summer heat sets in. This resiliency is created through what Salatin (2010) calls the cultivation of the "biomass," or the soil, which he also refers to as our collective "ecological umbilical" (p. 117). Salatin (2010) writes:

Today's conventional farmer lives in a world of fear. Indeed, perhaps we could say our entire culture lives in fear. In sharp contrast, I feel like I live in forgiveness....To embrace my ecological umbilical, and to appreciate

that things are right in my world because I have endeavored to create forgiveness and resiliency. (pp. 300-301)

These articulations reference the material aspects of dominion over the land, which is aligned with the premise of redemption. This further secures an alignment with Judeo-Christian ethics and the ordination of the farmer as the sanctified steward of nature and creation. Salatin's farm's website articulates this configuration, stating that they "are in the redemption business: healing the land, healing the food, healing the economy, and healing the culture" (Polyface). Salatin is situating himself, as farmer and steward, as the one responsible for providing such healing, resiliency and forgiveness to those who would consume food from his soil, which in turn also eliminates the culture of fear through providing healing via consumption as communion. Salatin (2010) writes:

I view my patrons as fellow healers. We're on this wonderful pilgrimage to heal health, the earth, our communities, our society. Yes, it's a noble, grand, sacred ministry, and we're moving down this path together....[Yet] anonymity is great for industrial food. Only a lunatic would want to look customers in the face. (p. 255)

These articulations function to (re)configure individual farmers as the ordained individual stewards of a specific consecrated physical and spiritual health and further articulate with progressive discourses pertaining to how the management of communally shared realms such as soil, water and air affect individual, public and environmental health. These alignments synthesize neoliberal and progressive imperatives to evince a hybrid rhetoric of provenance and governance along three nodes: first, it confirms the neoliberal notion that individual consumers are responsible for particular consumption, which in this instance are specific types of healthy, healing, alternative foods; second, it valorizes nature and especially the mystique thereof; and finally, it reformulates regressive cultural politics as sound environmental policy.

### Ministering to the Congregation

Within this employment of *terroir*, domain is further (re)negotiated in relation to the individual farmer insofar as local communities are reconfigured as the farmers' congregation. As these articulations of individual farmers manifest in the sale of "local" food, the farmer's agency is then extended throughout the local community, the congregation, with their consumption of his food. The agency of these individual farmers' is then extended even more broadly as consumption of these foods is articulated as benefiting the health of communities, both particular and general, as well as the environment, thus articulating the farmers' responsibility and agency with citizenship (Alkon & Agyeman 2011; Guthman 2011; Jones 2001; Paarlberg 2010; Patel 2007; Pretty 2010; Shugart 2010). In other words, broad notions of the intersections of the scale and location of the individual, community and ecosystem are navigated and (re)negotiated respective to individual obligations on the part of the farmer and the consumer to produce and consume "good" foods. This is accomplished via *terroir* insofar as individual responsibility, agency and labor are materialized in the soil over which the farmer has dominion, and are fully realized via the consumption of the fruits of that cultivated soil, which is in turn the obligation of the consumer, community and congregation.

### Consuming Health, Consuming Rhetoric

This chapter has assessed how the hybridization of neoliberal and progressive imperatives is accomplished through the axis of dominion as operationalized via the



concept of *terroir* through Salatin's articulations of the concepts of land and labor. These rhetorical invocations then realize neoliberal imperatives in a hybridized version that incorporates progressive sensibilities such as community, nature, interdependence and environmental stewardship.

By framing sound agriculture as starting with and being founded upon a particularly cultivated and sanctified soil, alternative farming practices are articulated as the embodiment of a cultural renewal that is accomplished by individuals choosing to consume food from farmers who care for the soil in ways that are as nourishing, restorative and beyond organic, as is Salatin's. Thus, by consuming Salatin's food or that of a farmer who utilizes his perspectives and practices, individuals fully realize the farmers' agency, labor and obligations.

This functions to re-establish neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility being exercised through consumption; individuals who are concerned enough about their health, their communities' health and the health of the nation, will properly consume food produced by farmers like Salatin in order to restore local family farms to their rightful places and to reform the food system. However, these discourses also merge with and reify progressive imperatives such as: establishing localized, "organic" or "beyond organic" food systems; creating strong communities through engagement with local farmers via farmers' markets; improving the transparency of the food system; attempting to reduce the harmful effects of energy-intensive synthetic production and transportation of commodity foods; enhancing local foodsheds with the goal of providing more whole, unprocessed foods; and finally, improving public health through advocating for more nutritious diets that have less exposure to toxic chemicals, additives and processing.

As taken up within alternative food discourses, *terroir* functions to synthesize neoliberal and progressive discourses in general as they pertain to the role of the individual in relation to health, the environment, communities and food consumption. In particular, individual responsibility on the part of the farmer is materialized through land and labor and is fully realized by citizens through their consumption, all to the end of environmental reformation. Accordingly, the hybrid discourse emergent in Joel Salatin's rhetoric reconciles and reconfigures these progressive and neoliberal imperatives.

## CHAPTER III

### INJUNCTION TO PROCESS: FARMER AS EXPERT

Another significant aspect of neoliberal governmentality has been a shift from injunction to expert advice as a means to govern citizens' actions from a distance as individuals exercise their freedom in adhering to the advice of these particular experts (Guthman 2011; Sender 2006; Shugart 2010). This ideology hegemonically situates proper consumption, as articulated by these assumed experts, with the end goal of self-actualization via consumptive means (Allen & Guthman 2006; Guthman 2011; Sender 2006; Shugart 2010). To this end, Harvey (2005) extended the notion of expertise to include those who function within "grassroots organizations...[which] give rise to the belief that opposition mobilized outside the state apparatus and within some separate entity known as 'civil society' is the powerhouse of opposition politics and social transformation" (p. 78). Thus, individuals and organizations across various cultural or "countercultural" sites can be situated as experts qualified to give advice pertaining to proper consumption.

As there are increasing intersections linking discourses of food and health (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Guthman 2011; Nestle 2002; Nestle 2007; Patel 2007; Pollan 2006a; Schlosser 2002), these neoliberal conceptions of consumption and advice pertaining to it align with healthism and lifestylism (Crawford 1980; Lupton 1994), which rely on ideological assumptions about the necessity of individuals' "taking responsibility for his or her health" (Lupton 1994, p. 336). Bunton and Burrows (1995) situate these ideologies according to contemporary notions of consumption, writing: "health promotion has emerged within contemporary consumer culture and is centrally concerned with influencing patterns of consumer choice" (p. 203). They stipulate that this "new public health" now expands the scope of healthism as "oriented towards the social body" (p. 204), insofar as the "contemporary citizen is increasingly attributed with responsibilities to ceaselessly maintain and improve his or her own health...[by acting] upon the recommendations of a whole range of 'experts' and 'advisers' located in a range of *diffuse* institutional and cultural sites" (emphasis original, p. 205). Insofar as Lindenfeld (2011) theorizes that discourses relating to food "constitute a highly contested arena in which cultural, social, economic, and political tensions converge," examining food and farming discourses becomes a central concern in establishing how ideologies relating to food consumption and specifically the expertise of relating what is "good" food, are taken up and (re)articulated in relation to these diffuse sites (p. 4).

Peterson (1990) contends that food and farming experts have been historically articulated via the notion of the Jeffersonian agrarian, which presumes "that the nation's continued prosperity demand[s] an agrarian society wherein farmers engage in...civilizing endeavor[s]" (p. 9) and where the "interaction between [land] regeneration

and progressive civilization [are]...a symbol of American nationality” (p. 12). Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) concur, when they write: “There is a strong tradition in the United States of supporting the small family farmer, who is seen as having a special relationship to the land. This tradition is often linked to the Jeffersonian concept of the yeoman farmer” (p. 27). As farmers within the United States have historically been imbued with this position of moral authority and progressive civilizing, I analyze how Joel Salatin’s rhetoric specifically (re)positions farmers in ways that both reify and reject neoliberal articulations of expertise. In assessing Joel Salatin’s rhetoric, I argue that *terroir* reconfigures expert advice through utilizing the trope of the humble, Jeffersonian agrarian family farmer. Specifically, this reconfiguration of expertise is accomplished in such a way as to preserve elements of the neoliberal imperative of expert injunction while simultaneously reaffirming progressive commitments to simplicity and authenticity. This reconfiguration then situates these alternative farmers as ministers whose authority is gleaned from their intimate knowledge of the cycles and rhythms of life—the processes—of a particular *terroir*.

### Conventional Industrial Agribusiness

#### Complicated Food Production

While food has been a significant and relevant cultural, political, economic and social issue throughout history, the expansion of agribusinesses and the publicity of industrial farming practices have created newfound concerns over the safety and morality of such food (Nestle 2007; Nestle 2010; Pollan 2006a; Paarlberg 2011; Schlosser 2002). Within the conventional food system, the expertise that governs food safety is configured

as a complex process of scientific testing operating in conjunction with technological tools for tracking inputs, output and distribution as well as labeling systems to inform consumers about these and other safety measures (Bennet 2010; Coff, et al. 2008; Lees 2003; Levinson 2009). This elaborate system, overseen by both private and public officials who manage and regulate the safety of such products, varies from oversight by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and industry food scientists and their various technologies, which record such things as food “traceability” (Bennet 2010; Coff, et al. 2008; Lees 2003; Levinson 2009; Nestle 2007; Nestle 2010).

Farmer Joel Salatin reviles the shortcuts he sees within the contemporary “industrial paradigm,” allowed by this overconfident, yet indifferent, system of food manufacturing and food safety as led by the conventional “expertise” that he adamantly rejects and disdains. In an interview, he told Wood (2010) he hopes his farming methods serve to:

[E]xpos[e] the kind of corruption and evil that is the [industrial] shortcut. What happens when you don't ask: how do we make pigs happy? Well, you view the pig as just a pile of protoplasmic structure to be manipulated however cleverly human hubris can imagine to manipulate it. And when you view life from that kind of mechanistic, arrogant, disrespectful standpoint, you very soon begin to view all of life from a very disrespectful, arrogant, manipulative standpoint. And the fact is, we aren't machines. (p. 2)

Salatin is pointing up what he sees as the hypocrisy of industrial agriculture, which relies on complex technology and artificial scientific expertise in lieu of simply getting to know the animals and the plants that are processed into food. Salatin articulates this mechanized system as reliant upon superficial knowledge rather than the straightforward, easy approach of knowing and respecting the soil, plants and animals. According to

Salatin's rendering of it, the industry and its experts perceive these aspects of food production as contrived ingredients that can be manipulated and altered at will.

Salatin goes on to position this perspective of "evil" within conventional food production, saying that he believes the "industrial food system is so cruel and so horrific in its treatment of animals. It never asks the question: 'Should a pig be allowed to express its pig-ness?' " (Wood 2010). Salatin relates the short-sightedness of the industrial experts to the soil, as well as animals, when he said: "even with all of our technological advances, we are still losing soil at a rate [of] about ten times faster than it's being replenished...as soil erodes...all the things that are there to maintain balance...all of that washes away, as well" (Croxtton 2010). This is because the "capacity to love and observe is much higher in humans than in machines" (Salatin 2010, p. 261). Thus, as Salatin articulates it, the solution to providing safe food while maintaining cultural and environmental stability would be to reject the sophisticated and artificial methods of industrial agriculture, their governmental collaborators and their collective so-called expertise.

### Oversight and Invisibility

Joel Salatin articulates the lack of transparency within conventional industrial food production as creating food risks rather than food safety. He stipulates that alternative farming can provide solutions to this problem through operating transparent, honest and localized systems of food production. Thus, he compares his farming practices to the methods of the industrial food system, which relies on governance and administration through the alliances of industry executives and policy makers who craft

regulatory oversights for food safety. Salatin calls this arrangement “the industrial food fraternity” (Phelps 2008). Salatin (2010) states that these:

Food police aren’t normal. People have always been able to eat pretty much whatever they wanted. No civilization has ever had bureaucrats determine for the populace what is and is not acceptable to eat. As the industrial backlash against local and normal food escalates, it will be interesting to see how much good food gets demonized before normal food wins the day. (p. 112)

Salatin is contrasting the current establishment of food safety with what he sees as the simplicity of letting people choose whom they want to buy food from and what they want to eat based on being able to go to the local family farm and literally see how the farmer produces food. This is positioned in relation to the difficulties in allowing consumers to go into industrial food processing facilities to see how things work. Salatin (2003) writes:

The very notion of encouraging people to visit farms is blasphemous to an official credo that views even sparrows, starlings and flies as disease threats to immuno-compromised plants and animals. Visitors entering a USDA-blessed production unit farm must run through a gauntlet of toxic sanitation dips and don moonsuits in order to keep their germs to themselves. Indeed, people are viewed as hazardous foreign bodies at Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). (p. 2)

Salatin states that this arrangement of government and industry collaboration is normal throughout the food system though it is most apparent, according to him, within the meat industry. Salatin (2011) writes of the health and nutrition implications:

The poultry industry and its collusion fraternity at the Food Safety and Inspection Service allow water chill tank agitators to insoak several percentage points, by weight of water into chickens...Because the tissue of factory birds is soft rather than firm, it is extremely absorptive. The tissue is actually spongy due to lack of exercise and lack of a chicken-friendly habitat. As a result, the carcasses soak up lots of water chilling down in tanks of cold water....Do you want nutrition or water? (p. 251)



These articulations serve to demonstrate the lack of connections between local farmers and consumers due to the complexity of the food system and the expertise involved in contemporary food production with its convoluted “safety” measures, as it is reliant on the mediation of scientists and technology over the common sense of traditional farming methods.

Salatin advocates allowing the customers to literally sense how simple the alternative farmers’ methods are because, “Non-industrial farming is all about cultivating relationships as part of the transparent and open-source production and processing lifestyle. Relationships blossom with trust and shrivel with distrust” (Salatin 2010, p. 252). In other words, Salatin’s simple food and farming expertise is drawn against the complexity and haughty control of the “food police” as a viable and easy way to restore a system of producing “good” and “safe” food. This comparison is made through articulating governmental intervention as obfuscation, which directs the excessive refinement of food as well as the consumption of such products, as contrasted with the simple relationships of trust between local family farmers and their customers.

Salatin positions himself as is in direct opposition to the supposed expertise of those who have trained to become the scientists and technocrats who oversee the safety of the food system through such entities as the USDA. And, as the USDA is also tasked with providing consumer education about what to eat and how much of it (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Nestle 2007; Nestle 2010), Salatin is situating himself as one who might supplant the USDA’s “food police” and industry experts when it comes to informing consumers about the quality, safety and proper consumption of food (Salatin 2010, p. 105). Salatin (2011) writes: “One of my main messages...is to try to awaken a thirst and

hunger for some basic food and farming knowledge before our appetite for cerebral and academic techno-subjects crowds out all of this historically normal knowledge” (p. 36).

Salatin (2010) writes of his perspective as compared to the supposed experts who espouse industry norms:

As a culture, we are running a giant experiment. Individually, we are running a giant experiment on ourselves. How much of this abnormal fare can my body stand before it revolts? Make no mistake about it, the escalation of Type II diabetes and obesity are directly linked to this giant experiment....The whole clean food movement, amazingly, has defined itself as unconventional. As if it's conventional to spray pesticides....If we could speak to the bugs in our bellies, and ask them what they'd like to eat, I don't think they'd respond: 'Whatever Monsanto concocts is fine with us.' I think they would say: 'What we've been eating since creation. Geographically and culturally diverse, yes. But dissected, genetically prostituted, chemicalized, irradiated, and reconstituted, no.' (p. 105)

Salatin's articulations configure him as a nostalgic, authentic farmer whose simple and accessible methods and positions are diametrically opposed to the conventional, scientific orientations of governmental oversight and agribusiness.

These configurations are rhetorically operationalized via *terroir*. Specifically, in this case, the conspicuous lack of transparency within industrial agriculture and the pervasive relevance and significance of such implications for alternative food production practices. And, the articulation of *terroir* within alternative farming as a locally visible and tangibly sensible aspect of food production that is accessible for the direct inspection and evaluation by consumers. Thus, Salatin's "beyond organic" expertise is situated in relation to his authentic knowledge of and linkages to the soil, as opposed to governmental intermediaries certifying his cultivation decisions and subsequent foods with a stamp of bureaucratic approval, while concurrently situating consumers' resultant abilities to sense the distinctions, first-hand. He states: "More and more people are aware

of the compromise and adulteration within the government sanctioned organic feed certification,” of which regulation by the government’s Food and Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)<sup>iii</sup> is the “major impediment to the local integrity of food,” and the natural reproductive processes that sustain life, such as “copulating earthworms” (Phelps 2008). Salatin’s “beyond organic” methods are not certified or regulated by the government entities that he proclaims to be corrupted and compromising due to their oversight of normal processes. Salatin (2011) writes: “I’m not a scientist or a statistician; I’m just a country boy who spends a lot of time communing with cows and pigs out in the woods and fields” (p. 69). This aligns with Johnston & Bauman’s (2010) position that, “Authenticity is not inherent, but is *constructed* through the perceptions of food producers and consumers...[and] food is understood as authentic when it has geographic specificity, is ‘simple,’ has a personal connection [and] can be linked to a historical tradition” (emphasis original, p. 70). In relation to Salatin’s positioning of himself as being a simple “country boy” in comparison to industry and governmental scientists, Johnston and Bauman (2010) write: “[D]own-home charm and lack of pretentiousness are qualities that are highly valued in our cultural leaders and culinary icons....authenticity [is] a reasonable and potentially egalitarian criteria—not snobbish—for cultural consumption” (p. 37).

Salatin articulates the differences embodied in his expertise and motivation from those in the agribusiness industry, as well as those who regulate it, as based in the cultural shift where we have “abdicated our food relationship” in favor of mediated and processed eating via scientific agribusinesses’ food products (Walsh 2011, p. 54). Salatin (2010) writes, “We’ve become a whole nation of technicians enamored of the how but not the

why” (p. 75). He situates this as a cultural move away from honoring other forms of knowledge due to our “compartmentalized fragmented systematized linear reductionistic individualized disconnected parts-oriented thinking, [where] we tend to disassociate the seen from the unseen. We do so at our own peril” (Salatin 2010, p. 108). Salatin (2010) writes that the large food processing facilities used in this industrial agricultural system of technology “are monuments to an elitist hierarchy that want ignorant consumers” (p. 109). Thus, Salatin’s credibility is located in his rejection of industry and governmental expertise, with its false idolatry of science and machinery, which has gotten our food system into such a quandary of unsafe food being produced out of sight. To this end, Salatin (2010) writes: “Production must be transparent and open....a farm without open doors is untrustworthy, period” (pp. 277-278). Thus, Salatin is drawing a distinction between the idolatrousness of industrial food production and their food safety experts who have led us astray and the authentic agrarians who use simple, natural processes. This is significant insofar as Johnston and Baumann (2010) write about the notions of “simple” and “authentic” in relation to the processes of food production and food itself:

Simple modes of food production (agriculture, livestock, and harvesting) are just as important to evaluations of food’s authenticity as is the simplicity of the food itself. ‘Simple’ production is most commonly equated with small-scale, non-industrial, and organic methods....‘Simple’ methods are argued to produce more delicious food, but they are also upheld as an end in themselves and serve as part of an evocation of agrarian ideals and the authentic, honest, pre-modern life they imply. (p. 78)

Lest we become apathetic about the overwhelming artificiality of the industrial food system, Salatin has thought this all through and provided for ways to bring about food that remains centered on these natural, simple processes.

Salatin posits that his authentically traditional farming practices rely on natural cycles of decomposition and regeneration as materialized in soil, which are as simple and basic as they have been for centuries and do not need approval from a government agency. Salatin (2010) writes:

I do not worship at the altar of science when science despises natural laws. I do not believe for a minute that genetic engineering will save humankind or that mono-cropping can ever be made more productive per acre than diversified synergistic symbiotic relational farming. I do not believe animal factories can ever be more efficient, productive, or healthy than pasture-based and deep bedded models. Such prejudice, of course, puts me firmly in the anti-science lunatic camp....what a wonderful place to be. Resting in the principles that have proven themselves for millennia. Resting in the historical authenticity of food communities throughout the world. (p. 303)

This serves to position Salatin as an authentic alternative to this literally and figuratively contaminated system of food production and food safety that is based on scientific expertise rather than possessing an intimate knowledge of the land and animals with which a simple farmer works. Salatin compares these simple practices to those of large agribusinesses who are part of the “industrial food cartel” (YouTube 2011a), because they actively lobby politicians and other policy makers to regulate the food industry in a manner that is responsive to large manufacturers at the expense of small, local producers. Salatin (YouTube 2011a) states that the solution to the over-regulation of food is:

To create a transparent food system that’s localized and has integrity. How do we do that?...At some point, there is food that transfers from your kitchen or your hands to my mouth that is not a government act....so we need to identify...at what point does a food transaction not involve the government?...There are numerous remedies [to fix the food system]. And we just need to be very creative about examining, there are about five or six remedies that we can, you know, articulate pretty quickly. But there are lots of remedies; none of which involve additional regulations. They all involve scale-appropriate appreciation of the inherent relational integrity of local, transparent food systems.

In other words, Salatin's articulations situate him as in a position to supplant the government and industry experts who control the regulatory system. He rhetorically situates himself as a humble farmer who is attempting to craft relationships with his local customers, who can literally sense the bond he has with his land and animals due to his farming processes that are obviously divergent from conventional agribusinesses. Thus, Salatin is invested in configuring farmers such as himself as the experts who could and should regulate the food system, "beyond organically," via their inherent proficiencies in cultivating *terroir*.

Salatin's articulations situate him in relation to the traditional practices and wisdom of the yeomen farmers who founded the country through transforming untamed frontiers into the land and culture that it is today. It is within this tradition of intimate, sensible agricultural knowledge that Salatin situates his connection to his *terroir*. Salatin (2011) writes, "I enjoy holding my head high as a farmer. Not just a farmer. A farmer in the Jeffersonian model. Businessman, professional, man of letters and lover of discourse. Why am I so unusual? I should be normal. Completely normal" (p. 248). Salatin articulates his rejection of the technical expertise privileged within industrial agriculture while aligning himself with Jeffersonian agrarian visionaries. In so doing, Salatin is positioning himself as an authentically rooted agrarian who is a legitimate alternative reformer because "the food system has become enslaved by the industrial food fraternity....If we really had freedom, farmers like me would run circles around the corporate-welfare, food adulterated, land-abusing, industrial farms" (Phelps 2008). This serves to supplant the industrial reliance on applying scientific and technological processes and inputs that increase production while destroying the environment through

depleting the soil, polluting the water and air and abusing animals. The implications for such a revolutionary perspective are broad because as Salatin (2010) puts it, “Barbaric cultures don’t attract meaningful commerce” (p. 216).

Salatin’s farm’s website extrapolates upon the simplicity of being aligned with nature as compared to the governmental and industry experts’ confidence in scientific and technological advancements in agriculture: “Mimicking natural patterns on a commercial domestic scale ensures moral and ethical boundaries to human cleverness. Cows are herbivores, not omnivores; that is why we’ve never fed them dead cows like the United States Department of Agriculture encouraged (the alleged cause of mad cows)” (Polyface). In other words, an authentic expert would easily figure out that herbivores simply don’t eat meat and would sense that you don’t feed it to an herbivore, particularly in a cannibalistic manner. As Salatin (2010) states, “we have no excuse not to return to historically accurate land management with herbivores” (p. 35). That is, aside from the governmental allowance of such aberrant practices. Salatin (2010) positions the long-term consequences of faith in such fraudulent certainties:

When all we have is a culture of technicians, prophets are called lunatics. I shudder to think how much progress we’ll make in the wrong direction. We’ll create all sorts of problems that our children and grandchildren can occupy their lives trying to solve. What a wonderful legacy. As an aside, I would suggest that government bailouts of inappropriate businesses indicates a technical solution, not a prophetic one. (p. 131)

Government and industry experts, with their faith in technology, are thus configured as being a farce while Salatin’s methods are positioned as unorthodox enough that they just might prophetically restore the natural cycles of traditional agriculture. This configures traditional agrarian farmers, such as Salatin, as historically authenticated experts due to their heritage of vigilantly cultivating *terroir*.

These articulations configure the farmer who simply senses the needs of his animals and land, his *terroir*, as drawn against the complexity and callousness of the industrial paradigm of scientific and business expertise toward the singular goal of increasing efficiency and profitability. Salatin situates his farming methods of production as based upon the simple “plant-animal symbiosis [that] heals the landscape, the community, and the eater, ” which is in direct opposition to the typical modes of industrial farming which do not allow for this genuine healing relationship with the soil and animals (Fowler 2010). Salatin articulates this profound, historical connection between the agrarian farmer and his stewardship to demonstrate the ease with which such an uncomplicated and humble bond could restore the food system through renewing this arrangement as the “normal” way to view food and farming expertise. To this end, Salatin (2010) writes:

Setting [farm] goals with soul may sound counterintuitive....Here’s the question: ‘What goals are noble enough to justify my life?’ That leads to noble and sacred goals, like healing the land, healing employees, healing customers. Goals need to be far bigger than sales. If we strive to be good above all else, growth tends to take care of itself. Growth can also occur in many ways besides gross sales of net profits. We can grow in relationships, knowledge, quality of life, spirituality....We’re much more concerned about healing than competition. (p. 288)

As these articulations demonstrate, Salatin is rejecting the worldly, scientific, artificial industrial orientation to food and farming in favor of something more vitally significant. Salatin (2010) writes that he is guided in his processes of soil cultivation by something much deeper: “I see a divine hand in this complex intricacy [of soil]—this marvelous, mystical, microscopic world—and fall to my knees in humility” (p. 117). In other words, Salatin has rejected the urbane so as to align with and perfect nature through relying on his humble abilities to sense the needs of the land, animals and humans. Thus, Salatin’s



uncomplicated recognition of the principles guiding natural cycles of (re)production allows him to be faithful to his agrarian traditions, which emphasizes his distinct and unique process of cultivating sanctified, traditional soil.

Johnston and Baumann (2010) situate these articulations in relation to representations regarding the seemingly inherent “simplicity” and “authenticity” in processes of food production:

‘Simple’ food is authentic because of the honesty and effortlessness it conveys, a trait that harkens back to the association between authenticity and individual sincerity, or being ‘true to oneself.’ Not only does authenticity connote positive values like sincerity or truthfulness, but it also emphasizes food’s distance from the complexity and manufactured quality of modern industrialized life. For this reason, ‘simple’ food is commonly associated with small-scale producers (often identified in terms of individual producers of family farmers), ‘fresh’ unprocessed foods (which are unadulterated and ‘true’ to themselves), and handmade, artisanal foods (frequently depicted as produced by authentic, sincere craftspeople devoted to their work and not motivated by greed or money). (p. 79)

Salatin situates his farming alterity in relation to the simple and authentic traditions upon which he bases his process of production. This locates Salatin’s authenticity as an expert insofar as his farming processes are underwritten by his uncomplicated yet divergent treatment of the land and animals. Thus, Salatin’s connection to simple traditions that have been lost allows consumers to follow the sage advice of such a wise and humble farmer so as to properly consume the enrichment inherent in his particularly distinct *terroir*.

#### Advising the Congregation

As Salatin (2010) sees it, “It’s a lot easier to complain and be a victim than [to] fix it” (p. 57) so he offers consumers a way to end “the victimization treadmill” (p. 62).

Salatin (2010) positions individual consumer agency as the crucial factor in altering the food system:

Nobody is putting a gun to anybody's head and making them buy Cocoa Puffs or frozen pizza. The opt out alternative is real and still the most powerful way to disempower things we don't like. Just take away their funding. Stop patronage. Vote with your pocketbook. If we plagiarized the Great American Smokeout and did a great American Fast Foodout, it would bring the entire industrial food system to its knees. (p. 108)

Consumption within Salatin's discourse functions to situate the individual consumer as capable of altering the food system through discontinuing their support of the industrial food system. To this end, he writes: "So how do we preserve farmers? We patronize them" (Salatin 2010, p. 98). While consumption remains key, the product itself becomes secondary as the farmer and his/her methods are configured as the prominent factor in transforming the system, the land and the culture. In other words, Salatin's articulations obscure the product to some extent, specifically as it relates to the valorization of the practices of production insofar as this realizes proper (re)production through cultivating exceptionally beneficial *terroir*. This serves to configure food and farming experts as those who personify authentic and traditional farming practices, which in this case happens to be those whose ideologies are modeled on a specific rendering of conservative Jeffersonian agrarianism. This reconfiguration then situates these alternative farmers as sages whose authority is gleaned from their intimate knowledge of the cycles and rhythms of life—the processes—of a particular *terroir*.

As configured by Salatin, each citizen can attempt to reform the food system and restore the foundational agrarian traditions and responsibilities of our culture by making appropriate consumptive choices—i.e., those that validate the local stewards of the land.

Salatin (2011) writes:

The average person is still under the aberrant delusion that food should be somebody else's responsibility until I'm ready to eat it....Restoring normalcy is our problem—you and me—not somebody else's problem. How many of us lobby for green energy or protected lands, but don't engage with the local bounty to lay for tomorrow's unseasonal reality? That we tend not to even think about this as a foundation for solutions in our food systems shows how quickly we want other people to solve these issues. Our food systems are simply a visible manifestation of all the value systems, or thought processes, of every individual in the culture. (pp. 48-49)

Thus, this serves to situate consumers as complicit, via their consumptive choices, in opting to sustain the status quo or reform the food system, which he posits is the literal manifestation of cultural values. And it is through these choices that said consumers choose to either continue to focus on these adulterated products, as Salatin calls them, or to valorize the farmers whose labor enriches the soil and culture. Salatin configures individuals as responsible for upholding the integrity of “good” food and “good” farmers, which situates specific modes of (re)production and specific farmers as the embodiment of the distinct and distinguishable characteristics of their *terroir*.

### Process of Hybridization

In summary, Salatin articulates conventional industrial agriculture as focused on products that are essentially manufactured within a highly complex system that relies upon unnatural, unfair and “abnormal” bureaucratic arrangements such as the regulatory “food police.” Thus, these articulations position industrial agriculture as focused on “adulterated” products that are highly refined as opposed to regular, whole foods. He compares this emphasis on products to his alternative yet traditional processes that rely on simple, humble processes that foster healthy relationships and a “normal” and healthy

culture where the product is incidental to the processes utilized. These articulations serve to relate the scientific expertise within conventional industrial agriculture as drawn against the authentic simplicity of the founding agrarian traditions of farming and food production in the United States. Thus, farmers like Salatin are positioned as plausible humble alternatives to this complex, over-policed food system, which functions to reconfigure food and farming about cycles of land and life. To this end, consumers are tasked with the consumptive responsibility to valorize the methods and practices of alternative farmers.

These configurations relating to farming and food function to reinforce the neoliberal imperative that privileges expert advice over regulatory injunction insofar as Joel Salatin is positioned as just such an expert due to his “pioneering” position and “prophetic” visions for reforming the farming and food system through utilizing methods that are based upon traditional processes of cultivation (Beatley 2010; Coleman 2010; Gayeton & Howard-Gayeton 2012; Hatch 2009; Ostrander 2011; Stiles 2010; Walsh 2011; Wood 2010). But Salatin’s rhetoric represents a hybridized discourse insofar as his expertise is articulated with resonant progressive imperatives: namely, of simplicity and authenticity. Specifically, imperatives are taken up in relation to progressive issues that Salatin speaks to such as redressing the environmental degradations that are now considered conventional practices within industrial agriculture, more “humane” treatment for animals under his system as compared to Concentrated Animal Feedlot Operations (CAFOs) and the improvements to public health through specific processes of localized food production that rely on natural processes enacted by authentic stewards of the land, which may serve to transform the industrial food system. Moreover, within Salatin’s

rhetoric neoliberal and progressive imperatives are merged to create a hybridized discourse via *terroir*, which indexes and secures the intimate knowledge of the distinct land and animals that alternative farmers tend. Accordingly, the figure that emerges from this hybridized rhetoric mobilized via *terroir* is the alternative farmer as minister: an emissary and conduit of and for nature, directing and advising his flock to appropriate principles and practices of consumption.

## CHAPTER IV

### SELF-ACTUALIZATION VIA CONSUMPTION: CONSUMER AS DISCIPLE

One notable aspect of neoliberal ideology has been to couch consumption as the means through which publics realize freedom and specifically self-actualization, which positions consumption as the mechanism to achieve this productive transformation as individuals exercise their freedoms via consumer choice (Allen & Guthman 2006; Guthman 2011; Guthman 2009; Guthman & DuPuis 2006; Harvey 2005; Jarosz 2011; Lupton 1999; Schudson 2006; Sender 2006; Shugart 2010). This neoliberal imperative then situates the individual consumer as tasked with fulfillment through making the “right” choices relating to consumption so as to attain health for themselves as well as the political and economic health of the nation. Rose (1996) writes that the state now seeks to govern “through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfillment” (p. 41). Specifically in relation to food, this imperative then serves to position the consumption of the “proper” foods as an essential cultural imperative of productive citizenship (Finn 2011;

Jarosz 2011; Lindenfeld 2011; Long 2011; Seyfang 2006; Shugart 2010; Todd 2011). To this end, Jarosz (2011) writes that “this is in line with the construction of neoliberal subjects as entrepreneurial individuals who are responsible for accessing food from the world market as it is shaped by...transnational agribusinesses and...consumption demands” (p. 121). Situating consumption as individual gratification that realizes self-actualization, consumption is rendered as a contribution to the economic and political health of the nation-state, so that consumption does double-duty as citizenship that further rationalizes consuming practices. In relation to this particular analysis, the neoliberal imperative is articulated as the consumption of the “right” *products* so as to achieve self-actualization and in so doing perform good citizenship.

I argue that via *terroir*, a discourse emerges within Joel Salatin’s rhetoric wherein neoliberal and progressive imperatives are synthesized in such a way as to reconcile both imperatives and evince a novel apprehension of consumption, which is realized in this hybridized discourse through the newly rendered figure of consumer as disciple. This serves to locate self-actualization through consumer choices, specifically relating to food and farming, as a manifestation of the consumers’ conversion to the consumption of the *processes* of alternative agriculture. This underscores the rhetorical configuration of Joel Salatin as the preeminent steward and minister, as described respectively in the preceding chapters, whose agricultural processes and resultant provisions enrich the citizenry through their cultivation of land and liberty.

### Conventional Food System

#### Procuring the Proper Products

As mentioned previously, within conventional agribusiness the product is the primary indicator of value. Industrial corporate agriculture efforts and energies are accordingly directed to profit enhancement, new product creation and market growth (Pollan 2006a; Richards et al. 2011; Schlosser 2002; Shiva 2008). Accordingly, within this corporate model the said product is deified as this commodity then becomes the focus of ongoing refinement and improvement so as to continually yield newer versions for consumption. These new products must then be conveyed in ways so as to differentiate them from previous ones that may lack the newer qualitative refinement and additives.

Salatin relates how an emphasis on the final product within the business models of industrial agriculture, particularly in the meat industry as it operates in his local area, affects farmers. Salatin (2010) writes:

Today, this [turkey production] industry completely dominates the local economy and community to the point that most people believe it is the local economy. But it has a tainted underside that is worth examining. First, it requires hundreds and hundreds of farmers to grow these turkeys. In the wisdom of the business model, as a vertical integrator, the turkey company owns the hatchery, the birds, the feed, the processing, and the marketing. The farmer signs a contract that requires him to supply a house [for the turkeys] and labor.

In many cases, since the farmers don't have the money to build a \$300,000 football-sized [turkey] house they mortgage the farm to....borrow [the money] from the turkey company....This arrangement converts the farmers from autonomous decision-makers to a completely dependent class of people dependent on exports, off-farm inputs, and outsourced decisions. (p. 32)

Thus, the product becomes key as its profitability and efficient production is refined to the point where everything else, such as local farmers and consumers, becomes



extraneous. This is because, according to Salatin (2010): “The food industry creates arbitrary objectives that do not include nourishment or taste” (p. 87). Those aspects of food come into play when the product is later refined and processed with nutritional and additives, preservatives and other value-added ingredients. Thus, the process of production then becomes less significant in industrial agriculture as inputs can always be incorporated during later stages of refinement. Essentially, what matters in this industrial food paradigm is the final product.

Salatin states that this industrial business model relies on constant growth to continue to reap the benefits of large-scale production by producing more and more value-added products. Salatin (2010) writes:

After all, bigger is better, right? Growth is always good, right? Remember, cancer is growth. Growth without responsibility is not healthy. Just so we can all be on the same page, let me list a few things we'd like NOT to grow: Disease, Pollution, Illiteracy, Jails, Murders...Divorce, Pornography, Drunk Driving...Welfare, Obesity, Type II Diabetes, Atmospheric carbon, Socialists, Monsanto....The point is, in normal conversation the assumption is that growth is good. I disagree. Only good growth is good. (pp. 37-39)

Salatin (2010) points out that this model of growth creates a focus upon the end product rather than the impacts of such “myopic vision” in relation to the processes of production (p. 39). This perpetual growth model relies on consumption as an obligation of individuals to contribute to the economy by sustaining and maintaining this unending stream of supplemented commodities. In so doing, citizens are thusly defined by their consumption of products that are “good” for them and “good” for the economy.

Self-Satisfaction

This configuration of the deification of the product rationalizes individual consumption as tantamount to citizenship, specifically the economic and political health of the nation, thus directing attention away from the deleterious industrial practices of agribusinesses. This obligation to individual freedom defines the citizen as an agent who is able to contribute to the vitality of the national economy through consuming products that support such a structure. As Halkier (2010) notes, this is due to “the development towards expansion of citizenship via consumption...as a kind of social conditioning” (p.

4). Johnston and Baumann (2010) also write of this notion of distinctive citizenship:

[Consumer status arises from] distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ foods. We argue that the drawing of these boundaries between good and bad foods reveal how people think about cultural consumption more broadly....we also document the particular qualities of food that are used to draw the boundaries between worthy and unworthy culture. These qualities...tell us a great deal about how cultural consumption functions to produce status in the contemporary United States. (p. 4)

This notion of distinction relates to the obligations consumers have to themselves, in procuring the “right” products, toward the end of being distinguishing consumers. This concurrently serves to situate these value-added products as supportive of the physical, economic and political health of the nation. With respect to what those “right” food products are for individual, public and environmental health, critics have noted that foods are generally distinguished as being some variation of “organic, local and/or sustainable,” foods, which often constitute a blatant appropriation and perversion of “alternative” practices to the same conventional agribusiness end of deifying the product while maximizing the profits (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Bowen 2010; Brown & Getz 2011; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman & DuPuis 2006; Holloway 2002; Pollan 2006b; Seyfang 2006;

Tovey 2008; Winter 2003). To this end, Guthman (2011) writes of the discursive implications of such articulations:

[B]ecause local, organic, fresh, and seasonal food has been posed in opposition to all that is wrong with the food system, it is being posed as what is right for our bodies and health. So the solution has become education to encourage us to make a different set of choices....As a result of this articulation of problem and solution, we are being presented with a self-serving, self-congratulatory discourse that exalts certain ways of being and disparages others, and places blame in many of the wrong places. (p. 6)

Thus, the product has primacy to the exclusion of all else as individual consumption of said produce is articulated as self-actualization that further realizes citizenship: productive contribution to the political and economic health of the economy.

### Alternative Food System

#### Consuming Natural Processes

As Salatin (2011) articulates it, the current food system is maintained and sustained because consumers “do not differentiate strongly enough between good farmers and destructive farmers” (p. 72). In other words, if people knew the farmers, were aware of how they treat their animals and knew what methods the farmers utilize, they would be able to distinguish what processes are “good” and what are “destructive”. As framed by Salatin (2010), this agricultural and consumptive arrangement is maintained because, via the product, money is the principle indicator of valuation:

[E]ating quality doesn't actually register on most farmers' radar. The fact that this stuff gets eaten takes a back seat to packaging and shipping. Commodity agriculture is fundamentally concerned about one question: does it fit our box? Every item has a box, and if you're [a farmer who is] outside that box, steep price discounts [of your food commodities] are yours to enjoy. (p. 78)

The result of this industrial model has been to further entrench a product-oriented mindset. The deification of the product has created manufactured food that is highly refined and processed so as to fit the parameters of industrial agribusinesses. Salatin (2010) states:

No wonder most food is now processed rather than eaten raw. No wonder the produce section gets short shrift in the supermarkets. The real money is in doctored stuff. It's breaded, pre-cooked, seasoned, food colored and texturized. That's because farmers aren't growing stuff to eat. If they were, you could walk through their farms and eat things. And people would enjoy the raw stuff. (p. 80)

For Salatin (2010), this focus upon the product exists because people have forgotten that “eating and ingesting are two different activities” (p. 87). Thus, in direct opposition to conventional agribusinesses’ deification of the product, alternative farming, as articulated in the rhetoric of Joel Salatin, valorizes the *processes* of food production.

Consumption as the path to self-actualization and citizenship is then retained yet it is reconfigured as being informed by a particular political consciousness pertaining to the processes of food production rather than simply consuming a specific product.

Additionally, this imparts upon the consumer the accountability of sacrificing, in terms of the extra costs, extra time and extra work that it might take to patronize local, alternative farmers who do not necessarily offer their wares at grocery or convenience stores.

Salatin (2011) posits the implications for the soil, for *terroir*, if these sacrifices are not made:

Don't people understand that a cheap food policy will create a cheap farmer policy? And a cheap farmer policy will create a cheap landscape policy? And a cheap landscape policy will create a cheap soil policy? No civilization can be healthier than its soil. No health care system and no bank bailout program can compensate for a bankrupt soil policy, which is exactly what a cheap food policy creates. (p. 250).

In other words, the ramifications of not properly consuming the right processes affects individuals, their community, the nation and the environment, specifically through ruining the productivity of distinct *terroir*.

Salatin (2011) writes that cheap food is being offset because consumers are becoming more aware of the “adulterated” processes used in conventional agriculture and are choosing to support alternative farmers, though more sacrifice might be necessary:

Until the last few years, our culture was content to let the local, transparent, traditional, normal food system coexist with the radicalized, industrial, abnormal system. You could shop where you wanted and it was okay. This is becoming a thing of the past. Today, this rise of the Church of Industrial Food, with its codification of orthodoxy, threatens to put us heretics on the rack. It is, in fact, beginning to round us up....Today I fear that none of us gets that well acquainted with our place to be this intimate with it. (pp. 349-350)

As articulated by Salatin, the alternative food movement is centered on consumers becoming educated and intimately connected to their local farmer and his/her *terroir* so as to reject the blasphemous methods of production that conventional agribusinesses utilize. This renders self-actualization through consumption that is supportive of the reformation of the food system. Citizenship is then positioned as consumption that contributes to the processes that localize the political and economic health of the nation.

Salatin (2010) situates the abnormality in the current food system and the problematic identification of comparing his processes to conventional agriculture:

It's not normal to apply super triple phosphate to plants. It's not normal to apply anhydrous ammonia to the soil. It's not normal to eat food you can't pronounce. It's not normal to eat food that you can't make in your kitchen. If you went to the average supermarket and removed everything that would not have been there in 1900, everything except the outside shelves would be empty. The outside shelves contain the produce, meat, dairy, and bread. The inside isles contain soy and corn syrup plus something....The whole clean food movement, amazingly, has defined itself as

unconventional. As if it's conventional to spray pesticides. As if it's conventional to knife anhydrous ammonia into the soil. As if it's normal to sterilize strawberry fields with fumigants....This adulteration of the food supply is both unconscionable and unprecedented. (pp. 104-105)

These articulations position the consumption of foods produced using traditional agrarian methods as valorized insofar as they are situated as the principle way in which consumers can reform this adulterated food system. This serves to situate the progressive imperative of self-actualization through consumption of process as a reconnection with techniques that cultivate nature so as to sustain individual obligations to the natural world and natural processes. Thus, via *terroir* Salatin is able to merge the imperative of self-actualization through consumption with ecological and communal obligations while evincing the consumer as a conversionable disciple to his distinctive processes of cultivation.

Furthermore, this privileging of process is rhetorically accomplished via *terroir*. According to Salatin (2011) this ability to authenticate “good” farmers and practices, blends with the fact that, “Land management...may [be] an offensive economic plan for those who want to acquire wealth,” because stewards restore their land over time rather than sell it to speculators at the first opportunity for a profitable sale (p. 73). Salatin (2011) situates this reconfiguration of process as being correlated to farmers regaining their rightful status, based upon their specific commitments to *terroir*:

[O]ur culture has created a bottom-feeder attitude toward farmers. What happened to Jefferson's agrarian dreams? It's been replaced by a redneck hillbilly D-student trip-over-the-transmission-in-the-backyard tobacco-spittin' stereotypical steward of our most precious resources. Known as rural brain drain, this phenomenon has gradually taken the best and brightest to urban centers and left the underachievers in charge of the landscape....Perhaps we should be reminded that this great nation was started primarily by farmers. Half the signers of the Declaration of

Independence were farmers, and these were also the most respected, revered people in the culture. (p. 241)

According to Salatin this evacuation of the countryside has left agribusinesses and “dumb farmers” who do not heed fundamental commitments to the nourishing of the culture or of the soil. For consumers to opt out of this food system, they need to know who grew their food and, more specifically, precisely how it was grown. Thus, as Salatin (2011) articulates it, “The challenge ahead is to put loving stewards on the land who can massage it into soil building and biomass recycling” (p. 73). Notably, then, *terroir* is integral to this rhetorical reconfiguration that privileges processes of food production rather than products.

Salatin originally gained widespread popularity due to Michael Pollan’s (2006a) profile of him in his book, *Omnivore’s Dilemma*. Salatin became a key figure in the book, in part, because Salatin would not ship meat from his farm in Virginia to Pollan’s home in California. Salatin would be able to maximize his profits by shipping his products across the country, yet, he is quoted as stating that he believes that there is much more to farming than making a lot of money. Pollan (2006a) writes of the first time he spoke to Joel Salatin:

Before we got off the phone, I asked Salatin if he could ship me one of his chickens and maybe a steak, too. He said that he couldn’t do that... ‘No, I don’t think you understand. I don’t believe it’s sustainable—or ‘organic,’ if you will—to FedEx meat all around the country. I’m sorry but I can’t do it....Just because we *can* ship organic lettuce from Salinas Valley or organic flowers from Peru, doesn’t mean we *should* do it, not if we’re really serious about energy and seasonality and bioregionalism. I’m afraid if you want to try one of our chickens, you’re going to have to drive down here to Swoope [Virginia] to pick it up.’....[What] Salatin was suggesting [was] that the organic food chain couldn’t expand into America’s supermarkets and fast-food outlets without sacrificing its ideals. (emphasis original, p. 133)

This underscores the fact that Salatin is focused upon his *terroir* more than the products because such an emphasis would pervert his farming processes.

Salatin's articulations align with alternative food movement discourses, more broadly, as changes in production and distribution processes are generally articulated as integral to the creation of food system "alternatives," as they are compared to conventional industrial agribusinesses' models. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) place this in relation to the advocacy for alternatives within what are called "food justice" movements:

Today, food justice groups have contributed to identifying alternatives to the dominant food system....The interpretations of food justice can be complex and nuanced, but the concept is simple and direct....Integral to food justice is...a respect for the systems that support *how and where the food is grown—an ethic of place regarding the land, the air, the water, the plants, the animals, the environment*....to achieve equity and fairness in relation to food system impacts and a different, more just, and sustainable way for food to be grown, produced, made accessible, and eaten...[which] aligns itself with the...[emphasis on] *food's community value rather than its commodity value*. (emphasis added, p. 223)

### Sacrificing Self for Nature

Consumption remains political in this reimaginary, but obligation in this case is not to self but to nature. As this obligation is reconfigured by Salatin, the consumer and his/her practices are situated rhetorically, specifically insofar as their obligation is redirected beyond themselves, for example toward nature, farmers and community, in such a way as to redefine citizenship in relation to the contribution to the overall health of the environment. Salatin (2011) writes:

No civilization has ever been in this state of environmental ignorance. In previous eras, people who lived in an area, whether they were new-comers or old-timers, had to be intimately aware of their surroundings and viscerally involved in rearing and preparing food for the table....No civilization in history has been this disconnected from its ecological



umbilical....Today we can live day to day, even a lifetime, without thinking about air, soil, water, lumber and energy. (p. 19)

This serves to situate consumers as complicit, via their consumptive choices, in opting to sustain the status quo or reform the food system, which he posits is the literal manifestation of our broader cultural valuations of nature and its (re)productive processes. For Salatin (2010), this is significant because the processes utilized in cultivating the soil are the manifestation of communion with nature and (re)creation:

Next to the act of marriage, eating is one of the more intimate things we do as humans. We take in this food, right into our bodies, and it becomes us. Flesh. Blood. Being. Mind.

Because it wants no relationship with the eater, industrial food is like prostitution. No courtship. No romance. No special knowledge and nuances to add delight to the intimate dining experience. Industrial food is like a one night stand. A mercenary relationship. The less knowledge, the better. (p. 253)

Fulfillment, then, is articulated as the consumption of natural processes, which allows the consumer to sustain and renew nature. This is a reconfiguration of responsibility as an obligation to nature, to something bigger than oneself, which may entail self-sacrifice.

This serves to position self-fulfillment as a secondary consequence of this more profound mission. Salatin (2010) writes:

As a culture, we've squandered moral and ethical values and prostituted the most distinctive building blocks of life to the highest bidder. Unless and until we curb this frenzied orgy that uses and abuses with insatiable amoral capitalistic appetite, the world will continue to view [Americans] as a disrespectful and egocentric monstrosity.

I actually believe there is more to life than conquering and acquisition. How about nurturing and discovering how to live better with creation's order and plan? Why must everything be manipulated to short-term human gratification? Why can't humans learn to live within the confines of nature's order? (p. 121)

This situates specific modes of food production and specific farmers as the embodiments of the distinct and distinguishable characteristics of the *terroir* they cultivate, while

imbuing the consumer with the responsibility to know the farmers from whom they consume as well as intimately knowing the processes they utilize. This rendering is thusly a reconfiguration of self-actualization as an obligation to nature, to something beyond oneself, which may entail particular self-sacrifice.

Self-actualization is accordingly reorganized as an individual imperative to consume distinct processes so as to fulfill obligations to and aid in the realization of nature by supporting farmers who properly cultivate *terroir*. Within this configuration, individual health is articulated as a beneficial byproduct, which inverts the conventional configuration that places the individual as the primary beneficiary with the side effect of citizenship. Within this emergent alternative discourse then, the principal beneficiary is, and should be, the natural environment; a more profound configuration of citizenship is then realized through this consumption of specific environmentally renewing processes as the nation-state is obscured by the natural world while individual health also becomes a side effect. *Terroir* mobilizes this, as it is how one connects to nature: through the intimate familiarity with and service to this distinct and local land.

Consumption, then, is also appropriately organized around process, which remains a political act as articulated within alternative food discourse, as with conventional farming; yet, the self (gratification/actualization) is rendered secondary in this valorization of the process and the consciousness that it entails. *Terroir* is key to this reimagined consumer as she/he is obligated to intimately know of how, where and by whom their produce was distinctly cultivated. Salatin (2010) writes: “[M]y presumption [is] that globalist agriculture should simply not be practiced. We would actually have a stronger local economy, a stronger local social structure, a stronger local ecology, if

Harrisonburg [Virginia] did not depend on exports to maintain its [agribusiness] empire”

(p. 41). Salatin (2010) relates this to the ability of localized systems to support themselves:

Certainly our localized, multi-speciated, pasture-based system requires more farms, more farmers, and more people scattered out across the landscape. But what's wrong with that? I can think of a lot worse situations to find myself in than being cooped up on a farm...I may not make lots of money, but I sure have a great office....I think repopulating the countryside with loving stewards is a great aspiration. I think it might even be a good national security policy....What a joy to know that our farm isn't dependent on foreign currencies and foreign resource streams. That it works right here, or anywhere. (p. 44)

The political dimensions of these choices are further validated by the distinction afforded through such conscious and conspicuous consumptive practices. Johnston and Baumann (2010) relate the notion of distinction through association with the producer, where: “the connection between an identifiable producer and [their wares]....[creates] food [that] is perceived as good and authentic when it is linked to a specific creator with honest intentions,” which underscores the primacy of process (p. 85). They also frame this as a sort of name branding in food production:

The foods produced...by named families are upheld as authentic because their origins are traceable to personalities and the individual creativity of family members, which is assumed to have a positive influence on food, rendering it part of a specific authentic artisanal lineage and differentiating it from faceless industrial food. (Johnston & Baumann 2010, p. 87)

This rendering of appropriate foci and obligation of consumption rhetorically configures consumer as disciples who actualize nature and the work of the farmers who, in turn, work the land. Salatin is quoted by Pollan (2006b) as saying:

All we need to do is empower individuals with the right philosophy and the right information to opt out en masse. And make no mistake: It's happening. The mainstream is splitting into smaller and smaller groups of like-minded people. It's a little like Luther nailing his ninety-five theses up

at Wittenberg. Back then it was the printing press that allowed the Protestants to break off and form their own communities; now it's the Internet, splintering us into tribes that want to go their own way. (p. 43)

Consumers, then, convert to this food system reformation through consumptively affirming their obligations, which rhetorically blends the self and citizenship with nature and community. This modification of consumptive imperatives, from a focus upon process rather than product, is specifically negotiated in relation to the unique *terroir* that materializes such processes. Both neoliberal and progressive imperatives are retained and are reconciled around the figure of the consumer as a disciple to a consecrated steward who is leading the current, necessary reformation. Salatin continued:

An alternative food system is rising up in the margins. One day [the poultry magnates] Frank Purdue and Don Tyson are going to wake up and find that their world has changed. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen, just as it did for those Catholic priests who came to church one Sunday morning only to find that, my goodness, there aren't as many people in the pews today. Where in the world has everyone gone? (Pollan 2006b, p. 45)

Salatin (2010) quite plainly articulates the consecrated role of the farmer in this reformation when he writes that his work is a “great land healing ministry,” which situates the consumer as a righteous disciple of Salatin the Reformist (p. 128). Via *terroir*, Salatin articulates the consumption of the processes of alternative agricultural producers as the means to both self-actualization and the actualization of nature, effectively reimagining the relationships between citizenship and health—individual and environmental, local and global.

### Realizing the Citizen Disciple via *Terroir*

The neoliberal imperative of self-actualization through consumption situates the individual consumer as tasked with fulfillment through making the proper choices relating to consumption so as to attain fulfillment of themselves and, accordingly, the political and economic health of the nation. Specifically, the conventional food system deifies the product and perverts the processes of food production, as well as nature, to that end. Within this conventional system, the obligation to the self is realized through consuming those products, which then has the additional benefit of realizing citizenship.

I have argued that via *terroir*, a hybridized rhetoric emerges as articulated by Joel Salatin wherein neoliberal and progressive imperatives are synthesized, which retains and reconciles certain aspects of each of those imperatives around the figure of properly consuming citizens as disciples. This serves to locate self-actualization through consumer choices, specifically relating to food and farming, as a manifestation of a commitment to the *processes* of alternative agriculture, which restore nature and the consumers' intimate connection to it via the farmer as steward. This serves further to reinforce the rhetorical siting of unconventional farmers, such as Joel Salatin, as stewards and ministers of nature, as chronicled in prior chapters. Accordingly, consumption is positioned as an act of generosity, even sacrifice, accomplished for the good of the environment and nature, wherein individual benefit is secondary.

Thus, articulations serve to reconfigure consumers as disciples of consecrated steward-ministers. This is rhetorically accomplished via the invocation of *terroir*; that is, alternative farmers' connection to and care of the earth—more specifically, to the local land—sites them as oracles and conduits for appropriate practices of consumption. In

this way, neoliberal and progressive imperatives are hybridized around consumption, which remains valorized, but specifically as organized by obligations to nature and sacrificing the self to that end. Thus, in a sort of communion, disciples realize their moral obligations to nature to the extent that they consume mystical and hallowed labor and land—that is, the processes of alternative farmers' *terroir*.

## CONCLUSION

### JOEL SALATIN: MINISTER OF *TERROIR*

As alternative food movements have gained visibility across media and have thus become culturally salient, it behooves us to examine the discourses of such movements. This is particularly significant insofar as the implications of such discourses may have wide-ranging material repercussions from the policy level to farming practices and individuals' daily consumptive food habits. For example, in 2009 after being "lobbied for months by advocates who believe that growing more food locally and organically, can lead to more healthful eating and reduce reliance on huge industrial farms," President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama created the first White House vegetable garden since Eleanor Roosevelt's World War II Victory Garden, which corresponded to Mrs. Obama's creation of the "Let's Move!" anti-obesity campaign to promote healthy eating among the nation's children (Burros 2009). Around the same time, President Obama also created the first-ever Office of Food within the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). At a smaller scale, "local" levels of the food system have also seen drastic changes as the growth in farmers markets has risen more than 153 percent

since 2008, to the highest level since the government's Agricultural Marketing Service began keeping records (USDA). It is widely assumed that these types of systemic and fractional alterations have come about as the global food system has become a culturally resonant issue and calls for change have been gaining ground.

It was with this context in mind that I undertook a critical rhetorical examination of one of the most prominent figures within alternative food movements broadly constructed, farmer and author Joel Salatin. Salatin is a significant figure to assess because he has gained cultural prominence and exposure across media, primarily relating to his pioneering position in alternative food movements (Beatley 2010; Coleman 2010; Gayeton & Howard-Gayeton 2012; Hatch 2009; Ostrander 2011; Purdum 2005; Pollan 2006a; Pollan 2006b; Stiles 2010; Walsh 2011; Wood 2010; Wirzba 2007). Thus, while Salatin has himself become a sort of social movement phenomenon, his rhetoric is broadly reflective of alternative food movement discourse more generally. This is primarily because Salatin's food-related rhetoric transcends localized food movements as his appeals resonate and intersect with various causes and issues as varied as environmental justice, food justice, libertarian governmental deregulation, biotechnology and genetic modification. Salatin's farming methods and his food-related rhetoric have summarily been taken up as the template for various alternative food movements, many of which are working toward influencing the material practices and policies pertaining to food production, allocation and consumption (Ambrose 2011; Balliet 2011; Hosking 2011).

Critics have identified neoliberalism as driving discourses surrounding consumption, generally, while some locate neoliberal imperatives within food discourses,



specifically (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Bunton & Burrows 1995; Gonzalez 2004; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman & DuPuis 2006; Jarosz 2011; Kleinman & Kinchy 2007; Lupton 1994; Lupton 1999; Pechlaner & Otero 2008; Sender 2006; Shugart 2010). Scholars have also recognized that neoliberal ideologies surrounding individuals' responsibility to consume properly produced, value-added, differentiated foods has been figuratively produced, enacted and consumed through both mainstream and alternative food discourses (Allen & Guthman 2006; Allen & Kovach 2000; Goldfrank 2005; Guthman 2002; Guthman 2003; Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b; Guthman 2011; Guthman and DuPuis 2006). Thus, I have sought to contribute to critical rhetorical theory via widening and challenging current conceptions with respect to how political imperatives are articulated in relation to consumption, in ways that negotiate cultural anxieties surrounding (re)production, consumption, health and citizenship in novel ways within various contested cultural sites. I have argued that neoliberal imperatives asserted by others are reflected but not wholly reified. Rather, these imperatives merge with progressive/alternative imperatives to evince a hybridized discourse. This hybridization is rhetorically accomplished through *terroir*.

This hybridized configuration rests on the rhetorical synthesis of three aspects of neoliberal and progressive imperatives. The first is the merging of individual responsibility with *stewardship*, as it is articulated as enhancing the mystical cycles of life and (re)production. Second, expert advice is configured through the simplicity and authenticity of agrarian *ministers* whose authority is gleaned from their consecrated, intimate knowledge of and connection to the soil. And finally, self-actualization through

consumption is fused with the configuration of consumers as *disciples*, adherents who actively practice and seek to propagate such faith.

The general implications for alternative food movements are such that progressive imperatives are taken up and rearticulated in productive ways within this discourse. Specifically, this may serve to reinforce the notion that alternative food movements are progressively oriented toward restructuring the food system in ways that are more ecologically sound and “sustainable” while concurrently democratizing consumers’ ability to participate in such a reformation. Thus, the progressive aspects of the alternative discourses are retained and renegotiated in dynamic ways within this particular iteration that fuses with neoliberal imperatives.

As for the alignment of certain progressive aspects of alternative food movements with conservative facets, these are blended so as to become enmeshed in sometimes contradictory ways; some of the established sensibilities and structures that alternative food movements seek to resist are rearticulated within their discourses. This serves to (re)legitimate the underlying imperatives of individual consumption, healthism and lifestylism within the food system by eliding consumer constraints and reifying the notion that purchasing power equates to a means of democratic change. This is of particular significance pertaining to Joel Salatin’s rhetoric as he has been configured as “the high priest of pasture....one of the natural-food movement’s most prolific authors.... [who is] a red-blooded rebuttal to the notion that the sustainable-food movement is a preoccupation of a pampered and unrealistic elite” (Purdum 2005). This is rhetorically accomplished in religious terms, insofar as mystification and deification of nature, metonymically mobilized via *terroir*, are at the core of this alternative imaginary. This

serves to underwrite, legitimate and negotiate the fusion of neoliberal imperatives with progressive ones and to further elide the structural constraints that citizens face when attempting to redress the food system and its varied environmental, social, labor and health impacts.

Yet, this hybridization is not a simple reification of neoliberalism. The retention and reconciliation of both progressive and neoliberal imperatives is accomplished in such a way as to blend them in a distinctively unique, resonant discourse that manages to assuage various cultural anxieties surrounding the contemporary food system, consumption and the impacts on natural world. Via the employment of *terroir*, this hybrid emerges wherein both imperatives are maintained but are (re)articulated in ways that complicate a simple rendering of the discourse as either distinctively conservative or progressive. This hybridization then reminds us of the complicated fluidity and instability of discourse and the need for continuous critical engagements with such evolving discourses.

This study contributes to critical rhetorical theorizing about discourse and materiality in four ways. First, it reminds us of the fluidity and volatility of discourses and how they inevitably overlap and intersect in novel and distinctive ways. Second, this study illustrates how power is accordingly shifted and negotiated in relation to these discursive flows. Third, it points to how discourses—including their negotiations—are materially accomplished, which in this case is through *terroir*. Finally, this study further points to the relationship of discourse to materiality by illustrating how policies and practices—in this case, attendant to production and consumption—follow directly from emergent discourses.

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<sup>i</sup> The system that alternative movements advocate for reform is the concentrated, monocrop agriculture production and its resultant processed foods. This shift away from local and regional food production is theorized to have been codified into U.S. food policy with The Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act of 1954 (ATDAA) and its Public Law 480 (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010, p. 81), which allowed U.S. agricultural production and exports to dominate “the [international] food trade for over two decades,” through creating the institutional governmental support system and public-private partnerships that eventually paved the way for the current agricultural industry to take shape (McMichael 2010; p. 58). This environment within agricultural policy created a small number of very large corporate conglomerates that have been able to produce “more efficient” commodity crops that could be transported over vast distances and modified into various processed products. The result has been to transform “rural landscapes as the American model of capital/energy-intensive agriculture,” became predominant in the U.S and throughout the world (McMichael 2010; p. 58).

The corporate-friendly environment within policy creation was further solidified with Earl Butz’s appointed by Richard Nixon as the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1971; Butz had served as the assistant secretary for years, and upon his appointment to the Secretary position, he swapped places with the then-Secretary of USDA, Clifford Hardin, at an executive position for the Ralston Purina company (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010, p. 76; Lauck 2000, p. 24; Nestle 2007, p. 100; Pollan 2006a, pp. 51-52; Schlosser 2002, p. 8). Butz asserted as the USDA Secretary that for the U.S. to maintain the competitive edge it earned within global agriculture, producers needed to “Get big or get out,” (Pollan 2006a, p. 52). Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) contextualized this transition: “Under Butz’s leadership, in the 1970s a huge expansion of commodity crops such as corn, rice and soybeans took place, leading to surpluses, greater exports, expanded domestic markets, and the developments of new food products,” (p. 76). Critics maintain that the various policy arrangements of this “globalized food supply is made to look ‘natural,’ [though] it is a deliberate result of policy designed and driven by global agribusinesses and supermarket chains,” (Shiva 2008, p. 107).

<sup>ii</sup> The Bob Jones University’s (BJU) Web site states that it is: “the foremost fundamental Christian university...BJU is training leaders by building up their faith and understanding of God’s Word, and by teaching them how to live the truth in every area of life.”

<sup>iii</sup> The Food and Safety Inspection Service is the public health agency of the USDA (FSIS).